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EMISSARIES OF LITERACY: REFUGEE STUDIES AND TRANSNATIONAL

COMPOSITION

by

Michael T. MacDonald

A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in English

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2013

ABSTRACT
EMISSARIES OF LITERACY: REFUGEE STUDIES AND TRANSNATIONAL
COMPOSITION

by

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Under the Supervision of Professor Alice Gillam

 "Emissaries of Literacy: Refugee Studies and Transnational Composition" uses

qualitative research in refugee communities and textual analysis of stories written by and

about refugees to argue that the experiences of resettled refugees, as well as the

experiences of the volunteers, aid workers, tutors, and teachers who work with them, do

not fit neatly within composition's current paradigms for studying literacy in global

contexts. Refugee identity and experience shows a complex link between literacy and

citizenship which is complicated by the economic and geographic histories of linguistic

imperialism. Refugee perspectives, and more precisely the challenges they pose, can help

composition scholars and teachers rethink our established modes of inquiry.

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INTRODUCTION: INTERSECTIONS OF COMPOSITION AND REFUGEE STUDIES

The relationship resettled refugees have with English literacy is fraught with competing messages about the value of education. Take, for example, the contrasting views of Emmanuel Jal and K'naan, two hip-hop performers whose music addresses the role of education in the contexts of displacement. Emmanuel Jal, a self-described "war child," was a member of the group of refugees known as the "Lost Boys of Sudan." When he was young, he was forced from his home in South Sudan and joined the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. He then went on to live and go to school in a refugee camp for ten years before being resettled in the U.S. K'naan is a Somali-born rapper who, as a child, was forced by civil war to leave his home in Mogadishu (Hannon).

Jal's songs and public speeches argue that education is the only means of addressing the kinds of devastating conflicts in which children are compelled to pick up arms. In the transcript to his *TED Talk*, Jal states, "the importance of education to me is what I'm willing to die for. I'm willing to die for this, because I know what it can do to my people. Education enlighten your brain, give you so many chances, and you're able to survive" ("Emmanuel Jal"). For Jal, education is the only form of aid that the international community should provide. To him, "aid" has come to take on pejorative meanings:

> As a nation we have been crippled. For so many years we have fed on aid. You see a 20-years old, 30-years-old families in a refugee camps. They only get the food that drops from the sky, from the U.N. So these people, you're killing a whole generation if you just give them aid. ("Emmanuel

Jal")

Jal sees education as providing an opportunity for people to break their dependency on aid, a dependency created by the structure of aid itself. In this sense, Jal has a liberatory view of education.

K'naan's outlook on education is starkly different, emphasizing the imperialist tendencies of education rather than its emancipatory qualities. In his song "Somalia," K'naan asks,

> Do you see why it's amazing
>
> When someone comes out of such a dire situation
>
> And learns the English language
>
> Just to share his observation?
>
> Probably get a Grammy without a grammar education
>
> So fuck you school and fuck you immigration. (K'naan, "Somalia")

K'naan's expresses a combative attitude toward education, reflecting the feelings of many refugees and immigrants from the African continent who feel the colonizing forces of the English language. While these two artists come from vastly different contexts, we can learn from the distinct ways that they speak back to the message of education.

The promotion of English language education on the global scale, or what Deborah Brandt describes as "sponsorship," typically comes in the form of companies and non-profit organizations exporting U.S. and U.K.-based, English-centric brands of education to places like refugee camps, imposing American ways of learning onto the people there. Such endeavors implement English-based models of education unidirectionally with the goal of transforming the Other. Collaborations by UNICEF and

the World Bank are some examples of how English education standards are exported to places identified as in "need" or in "crisis." (see "Basic Education and Gender Equality").

As educators, we typically endorse such models because we believe English language education to be unifying when used in multilingual and multicultural contexts. We see stories like Jal's, and we feel that we have the responsibility to fix the conditions of poverty and violence into which refugees have been thrust. A paternalistic attitude that believes education can transform the Other also assumes refugee students and writers have little to offer in return or are deficient in some way. Subsequently, refugees are thought of as passive objects of aid, a construction which fails to undo the negative connotations the word "aid" has for refugees. Local interactions between educators and resettled refugee students in both the community and the classroom are shaped by these prevailing views about education in global contexts.

The contrasting perspectives of K'naan and Jal illustrate the problems of promoting education and English literacy as transformative. Like K'naan, I sympathize with peoples' struggles in the face of inequality, especially in the contexts of forced migration. My research is critical of the hegemonic power of English literacy education, which reflects the trend in composition studies to have a global perspective toward the politics of language instruction. Yet, heeding Jal's words, my research is not a wholesale dismissal of English education in global contexts. While recognizing that the promotion of English is a global enterprise with colonizing effects, I have found that users of the English language continue to be critical and resistant. K'naan and Jal have experienced the liberatory as well as the hegemonic effects of education.

My research addresses two specific problems. First, refugee students are

disproportionately affected by the status of the English as a language of power. These students and writers provide perspectives that address this problem because they typically speak, read, and write in several languages. They have learned language, including English, for the purposes of resettlement, a process that reveals the high stakes of language acquisition. Each of the refugee students I have met over the years speaks four or five languages. English is only the most recent, and yet it poses some of the greatest challenges, at least in the stories I discuss in this project. For instance, refugee students feel they must learn English to assimilate. At the same time, they understand how holding onto their own language is a matter of survival. Teachers sometimes see students speaking in their own languages and assume that they do not want to assimilate, but students have a complex relationship with English. They know that it can open up opportunities for them while it also limits the ways that they are able to express their identities.

The second problem is how literacy sponsorship in refugee communities is treated as a unidirectional process of transformation. While the will to transform the Other applies to other marginalized populations as well, refugee communities provide a unique perspective for learning about the problematic links between literacy, citizenship, and identity. The work of literacy sponsors is often misinformed by popular representations of refugee experience. Likewise, we have conscious and unconscious beliefs about the places from which refugees are resettled, in this case, the African continent. For example, refugees from Africa, broadly conceived, are often depicted as "backward" because they come from a place that has been perceived as homogeneously underdeveloped. However, refugee students and writers draw from their experiences learning English to challenge

those assumptions and thus rework their relationship with literacy.

Because English language education is burdened by competing assumptions informed by legacies of both liberation and inequality, composition teacher-scholars need an ethics for working with diverse student populations that takes into account the rhetorical strategies of resistance used by resettled refugee students and writers. We need an ethics based on a fuller understanding of the politics of language acquisition. Wendy Hesford, for example, observes how composition has taken a "global turn" in its treatment of multilingual student populations (787). A global turn in the treatment of teaching and research asks us to examine our own positionality, as both researchers and teachers, within global structures of power. Borrowing from the Conference on College Composition and Communication Special Interest Group of the same name, I refer to this increasingly global perspective as "transnational composition" because of the ways it examines how the politics of English interacts with other languages across borders.

My project enters the conversation at the intersection of composition research and refugee studies because despite our turn towards the global, the perspectives of refugee students and writers have yet to be addressed. Examining the implications research in refugee communities has for the work of composition, I argue that literacy sponsors— including composition teacher-scholars—continue to devalue education in places like refugee camps when we could gain valuable insight from these dynamic student populations. Our changing student populations reflect our evolving local communities. With increasingly multilingual backgrounds, students enter our classrooms with a diverse range of educational histories. Since I started teaching ESL courses, I have had at least one student in each class tell me about living in a refugee camp before coming to the U.S.

Many more students have told me that someone they knew or someone in their family had been a refugee. Their struggles to negotiate the many competing discourses in their lives deserve careful attention because by listening to the stories refugees tell and the ways they choose to tell them, we learn about the strategies of resistance available to refugee students and writers.

For my objects of study, I examine stories by and about refugee students. These stories come in several forms. In a rhetorical analysis of accounts written by people who have sponsored resettled refugee students, I identify the assumptions that people make about refugees and Africa. In stories written by refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan, I identify ways in which refugees appropriate those assumptions. To complement my textual analysis, I conducted fieldwork in a local refugee resettlement agency, the Pan-African Community Association (PACA), wherein I interviewed aid workers, tutors, and students in order to understand the different ways these groups reproduced or challenged dominant discourse when they talked about their experiences in the contexts of literacy sponsorship. In the next section, I review the key debates surrounding literacy most relevant to refugee resettlement as well as introduce the concepts of my interpretive framework.

Literacy and Citizenship

Literacy acquisition in the lives of refugee students and writers takes place across a diverse range of what David Barton calls "domains of literacy" ("The Social Nature of Writing" 5). Barton identifies "home," "school," and "work" as three primary domains in which people practice literacy. A domain, Barton explains, "constitutes a distinct social

situation" involving "identifiably different types and uses of literacy" (5). Barton uses these distinctions to examine how different contexts might "contrast" with one another (5). Language use is valued asymmetrically in different domains. For instance, school officials value standard varieties of English and have the authority to devalue languages students speak at home. The debate about home/school discourses applies to many students, especially those in the U.S. labeled ESL. Particular to refugee students, English language educators see education and language learning in the domain of the refugee camp as deficient, while they regard education in U.S. classrooms as necessary for refugee students to gain citizenship. Consequently, the U.S. classroom is regarded as a site of transformation.

While Barton differentiates the contexts of literacy learning, Brian V. Street distinguishes between paradigms, or "models" of literacy. Street identifies the dominant model in the West as an "autonomous model" wherein literacy is thought of as having a "single direction" of "development" and is linked to "progress," "civilization," "individual liberty," and "social mobility" (29). In contrast, an "ideological model" of literacy acknowledges "the ideological and therefore culturally embedded nature" of literacy-learning (29). Because educators consider refugee students to be deficient, refugees are most often presented with "autonomous" models of literacy. Literacy is unidirectionally imposed on refugee students as a way for them to overcome the supposed obstacles of their inadequate "camp" education. The autonomous model does not value the strategies or experiences refugee students might bring with them to the English literacy learning occasion. The ideological model, however, values experience and incorporates competing views of literacy learning, both liberatory and hegemonic.

In *Literacy Myths, Legacies, and Lessons*, literacy historian Harvey J. Graff explains how the impulse to export and impose English literacy education is informed by the myth that literacy is inherently empowering. For example, Graff identifies how literacy has been "unreflectively incorporated into the principal narratives of the rise of the West and the triumph of democracy, modernization, and progress. Indeed, literacy was equated with those qualities, each seemingly the cause of the other in a confused causal order" (113-14). The long-standing connection between "progress" and literacy places an implied emphasis on English literacy specifically. Reading and writing in general are often regarded as empowering and "uplifting," but no language has been considered more uplifting than English, the steward of capitalism and democratic participation.

I believe that the assumptions linking literacy and progress affect our views of the world, our global perspective. For example, why is a place like Africa continually understood by many Americans as one homogeneous space? I was reminded of my own lack of knowledge about Africa during my fieldwork at PACA. I had been present when new volunteers were asking the program coordinator where the students were from. He told them that many had recently arrived from Eritrea. One volunteer asked, "Where is Eritrea?" admitting to having never heard of it before. My first thought was, "Typical…the white, well-intentioned volunteers don't even know the country the people they are volunteering to help come from!" My second thought, I am ashamed to confess, was that I had not known very much about Eritrea until the spring before, when the refugee students arrived and I met them for the first time.

Insufficient geographical literacy could be one reason why the volunteers and I

did not know where Eritrea was, but I do not think it was a coincidence that well-intentioned, white, American volunteers had little knowledge of the places from which refugees living in our city were resettled. Reasons beyond a lack of knowledge contribute to the reality that an African nation like Eritrea is missing from our collective consciousness. A similar phenomenon exists when I hear students in my college-writing classes describe Africa as a "country" rather than a continent. It is probably one of the most common misrepresentations of Africa people express. Americans are notorious for not knowing where anything is, but beyond content knowledge, there are particular ideological reasons why volunteer tutors would think in these ways. When quizzed, I believe we would certainly identify Africa as a continent, but in everyday discourse, our available means draw from impressions and assumptions we have learned from our communities, the media, and the many texts that surround us.

The primary lens for my examination of the intersections of composition and refugee studies is Deborah Brandt's theory of "literacy sponsorship." For instance, Brandt defines "sponsors of literacy" as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy – and gain advantage by it in some way" (166). In the lives of refugees, literacy sponsors come in the form of aid workers, case managers, volunteers, tutors, and teachers as well as aid and charity organizations that promote literacy as a means for attaining citizenship, education, and employment. Literacy not only takes the form of English language acquisition, but also includes cultural literacy through "orientation" classes and volunteer mentoring programs. This is the main form of contact new refugees have with other communities. Literacy sponsorship is a framework for studying the many

asymmetrical relations of power pertaining to literacy projects in refugee communities because of the advantages sponsors stand to gain from acts of sponsorship.

Studies of literacy sponsorship, such as Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives* and other ethnographies of literacy practice (see Barton, Street, Cushman), often privilege the protagonist of the literacy narrative—the individual or group being sponsored—in an effort to identify how literacy is acquired and how literacy practices are shaped by a person's material conditions. Because of the asymmetrical relations of power I observe in the literacy sponsorship of refugee students, I attend not only to the voices of refugees, but also to the voices of their sponsors: the aid workers, volunteers, and tutors that aid in their English language learning. In my study, rather than focus on individual literacy practices, I analyze the relationships refugee students and writers have with those who sponsor their English literacy.

Perhaps the most complicated debate surrounding literacy in refugee communities is how educators unreflectively link literacy to popular conceptions of citizenship. For instance, scholars such as Graff, Morris Young, and Amy J. Wan explore how citizenship has come to be defined in relation to literacy. From a historical perspective, Graff shows how literacy has been linked to economic development and, in turn, to the "requisites of progress" (2). Continuing this trajectory, Young discusses how literacy can be a "symbolic requirement of citizenship" (98). In his view, citizenship is often associated with a fluency in standard English which, he argues, connects language with race and citizenship. The varieties of English used by minority groups are less valued, and thus their fulfillment of the requisites of citizenship is suspect. Speakers of non-dominant varieties might be regarded as non-citizens or second-class citizens.

Wan observes how understandings of citizenship in the writing classroom go beyond definitions of legal status to emphasize how literacy can support the educational goal of producing the "good" citizen (41). For some, "good" means English-speaking. For others, it means informed participation in the democratic process. The latter, as Wan observes, has become a "common place" in educational discourse (43). Wan believes exposing competing definitions of citizenship would enable a more "robust" treatment of citizenship that more accurately reflects the processes of "globalization, transnational migration, law [and] public policy" (46). The perspectives of refugee students and writers provide valuable insight into the links between citizenship and literacy. For example, education in refugee camps often includes English language instruction. Not coincidentally, refugees are interviewed in English during the resettlement process, with translators provided if needed. English is thus intimately linked with their status as non-citizens. It is a condition of their resettlement that operates as both an opportunity and a barrier.

Discourses of Power

In order to examine the power structures supporting literacy sponsorship in global contexts, I identify what some call "discourses of power," or discourses that are widely used to represent people in ways that continue hegemonic processes of Othering. As James Paul Gee argues, literacy can be defined as fluency in a secondary or "dominant" discourse (9). Discourse operates according to a logic of "value" whereby dominant discourses are valued while non-dominant discourses are devalued. Learning the ideals and conventions of different discourses is the primary goal of literacy acquisition (6-7).

Moreover, the value economy of discourse is global in scale. For instance, Norman Fairclough observes how "'globalization' is a keyword in what might be seen as an ideological discourse of change" and because English has become a global lingua franca, "particular ways of representing the world" are being globalized (231).

Judith Butler's work shows how these structural, value-driven manifestations of discourse create images, or subjectivities, that are continuously circulated and believed. Butler argues, "domains of political and linguistic 'representation' set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed with the result that representation is extended to only what can be acknowledged as a subject" (*Gender Trouble* 2). The refugee subject, for example, constitutes both a legal and political category into which displaced peoples are forced. When encountering refugee communities, sponsors already have a knowledge of refugee subjectivity in their mind, and this knowledge shapes their interactions. Discourses of power, in my view, are those discourses meant to represent the Other, but are widely accepted or based on widely held misunderstandings and assumptions.

Discourses of power are what scholars consider "naturalized." As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet explain, naturalized discourse "masks" ideology and refers "to people's sense of what needs no explanation" (43). It follows that discourse has consequences for the distribution of material resources. In the lives of refugees, legal standing as a "refugee" makes one eligible to receive humanitarian aid. However, aid is not distributed equitably across refugee groups, and those who do not fit the ideal image of the refugee have their eligibility cast into suspicion.

In this project, I examine how discourses of power limit the rhetorical mobility of

literacy sponsors and the refugee students they work with. That is, the "available means" of literacy sponsorship are constrained by dominant representations of at least three different contexts: language, refugee identity, and geography. First, discourses of power about English language literacy include "standard language ideology" (Lippi-Green), "monolingual/monocultural bias" (Canagarajah), the "myth of linguistic homogeneity" (Matsuda), the "commodification" of the English language (Horner, Prendergast), literacy as resource and "means of production" (Brandt *Literacy in American Lives*), and the perceived links between literacy, citizenship, and economic development (M. Young, Graff).

Second, according to refugee studies scholar Liisa Malkki, refugees are bound by discourses of power that enforce an idealized "refugeeness," standardized as an ideal condition perceived to be "*the* refugee experience" (510). Though refugee identity is attached to an official, government-granted status, application of this status is inconsistent, context-bound, and made subjectively under the guise of objectivity. Refugee identity is vexed by additional discourses of power which represent the refugee figure in monolithic terms. In "Rhetorics of Displacement," Katrina M. Powell identifies dominant narratives about refugees that "blame the victim" and "dehumanize the displaced through metaphors of savagery" (302).

Finally, literacy sponsorship in refugee communities is also burdened by discourses of power about the contexts from which refugees are resettled. In the case of refugees from the African continent, these include colonial logics of racism and liberal-centric ideologies of civil society. As James Ferguson explains, "Historically, Western societies have found in 'Africa' a radical other for their own constructions of civilization,

enlightenment, progress, development, modernity, and, indeed, history" (2). For example, the "First World" configures "aid" according to discourses of pity, hope, and charity and directs them toward the so-called "Third World" and the idea of "Africa."

In this project, I sometimes feel trapped by discourses of power about refugee experience even as I try to critique them. I try to use the term "Africa," not as a blanket generalization, but as a reminder of the discourses that shape the perceptions of literacy sponsors. For example, the Lost Boys of Sudan, as well as my research participants, are subject to assumptions about Africa being made up of "oral" cultures. As literacy sponsors, we project what we think we know about violence and civil war upon them, even sometimes on their very bodies as we try to understand the differences between our lives. Their experience of going to school in refugee camps appears to us as an educational deficiency. In somewhat of a contradiction, the Lost Boys' transition to the U.S. sometimes depicted according a "model minority" paradigm. The Lost Boys become examples of what it means to overcome trauma for the sake of pursuing U.S. education. In contrast, other refugee groups might be considered standoffish or "unassimilable" based on the discourses of power informing their particular situation.

However, the hegemonic tendencies of literacy sponsorship are not wholly successful. Scholars such as Powell, Canagarajah, and bell hooks look to ways in which individuals and groups "speak back" to the discourses of power that shape their lives. While I more thoroughly examine the benefits and limitations of the term *emissary* in Chapter One, my use of the phrase "emissaries of literacy" is meant to provide a language for helping literacy sponsors recognize these acts of "speaking back" in the rhetorical strategies used by refugee students and writers. When hooks discusses the notion of

"talking back," she describes an act that, for her, "meant speaking as an equal to an authority figure" (5). hooks calls this "a courageous act—an act of risk and daring" (5). To this tradition of appropriation, Linda Tuhiwai Smith adds the idea of "researching back," or what she describes as an analysis of how research has been "one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized" (7). Smith specifically addresses the kind of "researching back" those who self-identify as "indigenous peoples" conduct in postcolonial contexts.

My position of privilege means that I cannot cast my own project as a form of "researching back." Instead, my contribution to transnational composition is to listen attentively and responsibly to the stories of refugee students and writers for moments when they speak back to the discourses of power shaping their literacy sponsorship. Listening attentively means paying attention to the actual words and rhetorical strategies refugees use to tell their stories. Several examples in my project show how a sponsor will quote refugee students and then ignore what they say, which to me indicates a clear exertion of power. The fact that such examples come from published texts shows how pervasive this act of misappropriation can be.

In the following chapter descriptions, I outline more specifically how these issues inform the literacy sponsorship of refugee students and writers.

Chapter Descriptions

Chapter One: "Transnational Composition: Key Terms for Global Turns"

Chapter One introduces my story as a literacy sponsor to refugee students like the Lost Boys of Sudan. I narrate how I came to research refugee experience and how this

knowledge informs my understanding of literacy in global contexts. Working with refugee students has caused me to question my own assumptions about English literacy in the global, geopolitical landscape, highlighting the discourses of power produced, circulated, and consumed within acts of literacy sponsorship.

After introducing my experience as a literacy sponsor, I review scholarship in composition studies that specifically addresses the transnational processes of globalization. Terms like *transnational* and *globalization* can be difficult to unpack, each having benefits and limitations. They are meant to describe a range of processes that operate on a global scale, such as those governing the complicated contexts of refugee resettlement. Like literacy, globalization is a phenomenon surrounded by debate. In this case, scholars debate globalization's perceived newness, uniqueness, and applicability. In order to work productively with the difficulties of this language, I organize this chapter through the identification of five keywords: *global*, *mobility*, *citizenship*, *sponsor*, and *emissary*, which illustrate the effects of globalization on the literacy sponsorship of refugee students. In my study of these words, I show links between local instances of literacy sponsorship and the global processes of refugee resettlement. More broadly, approaching "transnational composition" through these keywords enables me to consider the implications broad concepts like globalization have for composition studies.

Chapter Two: "Making the Familiar Unfamiliar: Research Principles and Methods"

Chapter Two outlines the specific methods I used in my textual analysis and fieldwork. In both cases, I keep in mind Patricia Sullivan's idea that research should seek to make the familiar unfamiliar (99). As I analyze the published stories written by and

about the Lost Boys of Sudan in Chapter Three and my fieldwork interviews with students in an after-school program for African refugees in Chapter Four, I pay most attention to the everyday discourses—the repeated and familiar tropes and utterances about literacy, education, "Africa," and refugees—because it is within these discourses that power is most expressed in naturalized ways.

As I discuss my methodology, I draw from feminist theory and approaches to critical ethnography that examine self-reflexive research practices. As a white man representing the academy and a native-born English speaking U.S. citizen, I cannot escape the fact that I am unintentionally engaging in the colonial, imperialist project of researching the Other. Chapter Two provides space for me to explore some of these complications and the ways in which I account for my positions of privilege as a researcher and writer.

Chapter Three: "Sponsors of Literacy: The Lost Boys of Sudan"

This chapter examines instances of literacy sponsorship in stories written by and about the Lost Boys of Sudan. The "Lost Boys" are a group of young, South Sudanese who lived in a Kenyan refugee camp, where they attended school before eventually being resettled in the U.S. Stories of this transition are drawn from the perspectives of the Lost Boys themselves, from journalists, and from sponsors. I pay attention to how the English language is described as possessing transformative power, how it helps refugee students develop into model, American students. These descriptions are compounded by the assumptions sponsors and journalists make about the specific realities of "Africa" and African refugee camps as well as about refugees more broadly. Sponsors often blame the

idea of "African culture" for these assumed material and educational deficiencies. Paying

close attention to the stories refugees tell and the ways they choose to tell them shows

how refugee students speak back to these dominant discourses. Conversely, I also address

how the stories of refugee are ignored, written over, and commodified in ways that

celebrate American exceptionalism and "uplift" of the Other. Refugee stories are not

given an equal opportunity to be heard. Even when refugee students express resistance to

discourses of power, those expressions can be appropriated by groups and individuals

who engage in sponsorship, such as the organizations and volunteer mentors who try to

help the Lost Boys of Sudan.

Chapter Four: "Emissaries of Literacy: Fieldwork Interviews and Findings"

Drawing from interviews I conducted in an after-school program for refugee

students, Chapter Four examines local instances of literacy sponsorship and the ways in

which aid workers, tutors, and students interact with discourses of power. When

interviewing tutors and aid workers, I found that they both reproduced and resisted

discourses of power in a variety of ways. At times, they repeated stereotypes about the

role of education and economic development in the lives of refugees from Africa. At

other times, they expressed a reflective awareness of those discourses. I see these

contradictory moments as representing the kinds of rhetorical mobility available to tutors

and aid workers in this particular example of literacy sponsorship. The students I

interviewed exercised a greater degree of rhetorical mobility compared to tutors. They

continually appropriated and spoke back to the many discourses of power in their lives.

Students were neither completely alienated from the colonial tendencies of the English

language, nor were they uncritically celebratory of its alleged benefits. Refugee students communicated a critical awareness of the assumptions made about them and the limits imposed on their language use. Rather than regarding their own refugee experience or their education in refugee camps as monolithically deficient, students viewed themselves as active language users. They found both benefits and limitations to the demands of the English language, and allowed English to commingle with their other, multilingual literacy practices.

Chapter Five: "Transnational Composition and Implications for Teaching"

My work in refugee communities has confirmed for me the importance of studying multilingual writing pedagogies in composition classrooms. Because the refugee students and writers in my project demonstrate a diverse repertoire of rhetorical strategies in the face of countless discourses of power, I see the value of paying close attention to the experiences students bring with them to our increasingly multilingual writing classrooms. I understand the consequences of ignoring the politics of language instruction. A "global turn" for composition studies appears to be still underway as composition teacher-scholars—rather than impose unidirectional literacy practices upon students in an effort to transform them—work to change the structures of standard language ideologies in the academy. My experience in refugee communities as taught me that discourses of transformation are dehumanizing. Thus, I reassess the paradigm of literacy sponsorship according to the insights of refugee students and writers.

This chapter examines the composition pedagogies I find most useful for working with students on the politics of language use. I address methods for working with basic

writing and ESL students in ways that are sensitive to the multilingual strategies they bring to the classroom. I also address working with native-English speaking students on the problematics of refugee experience in order to help them use their writing to develop a critical awareness of education in global contexts. Lastly, I suggest possibilities for teacher and tutor professional development, as I work to reimagine literacy sponsorship as a more equitable enterprise, not limited by discourses of power.

Further questions remain. In an effort to identify the discourses of power that limit the physical and rhetorical mobility of refugee students and writers in the U.S., I have focused primarily on the relationships between the sponsor and the sponsored. As my research shows, literacy sponsors forge a wide variety of relationships across literacy learning contexts. For instance, several of my participants indicated that relationships between different sponsors were the resources they valued most when working with refugee communities. They wished to develop stronger relationships with high school ESL teachers and expressed wanting to have a stronger relationship with local universities. The contexts of literacy sponsorship in refugee communities is vastly complex, bound up with local problems of learning a new language or finding a job. On a global scale, literacy sponsorship is also affected by the processes of economic development and laws regarding the movement of people. My project affords composition teacher-scholars a more ethical means of supporting literacy in refugee communities as well as in our increasingly transnational composition classrooms.

CHAPTER ONE: TRANSNATIONAL COMPOSITION: KEY TERMS FOR GLOBAL TURNS

Introduction: Global Turns

I was trained as a writing tutor before I was trained as a teacher or researcher. As an undergraduate English major, I remember being urged several times by my classmates to work at the writing center. I was identified as a good reader, but for some reason, perhaps shyness, I was resistant. However, once I became part of the writing center community, very little could pry me away. Our writing center had a beautifully large wooden table installed by Robert Connors years before, and I ended up spending a great deal of time with my colleagues there: gathering for meetings, eating lunch, chatting aimlessly between appointments, and of course, sharing writing. My down-time was spent there. My off-time was spent there. I even skipped class a few times, sitting at the table talking or reading while my class met two floors above in the same building. I was trained by a feminist writing center staff to participate actively in an inclusive, collaborative community of writers and readers. To us, the table was a symbol of collaboration, and the writing center space was the symbolic "center" of writing on campus, the ideal place for discussions about writing to take place. Despite my commitment to that table and the people who gathered around it, I would soon tutor a student who caused my feelings about the writing center and other spaces of literacy-learning to shift significantly.

After several semesters of tutoring, I was given more hours and more responsibilities at the writing center. That was when the assistant director approached me (most likely while I was sitting at the large table) and asked if I could meet with a student who had an "extraordinary" story. He was a member of the group known as the "Lost

Boys of Sudan," refugees who had recently resettled in the U.S. to go to school. He

wanted help with his first-year composition research essay. I had never heard of this

group before and had very little knowledge of Sudan or the kinds of experiences refugees

might have. As he signed in and filled out some paperwork, I introduced myself. He was

quiet and friendly. He told me to call him "Dominic."[1] We sat in a back office, and I

followed standard writing center "best practices" for working with students identified as

non-native speakers of English, asking him if I should read his paper out loud and telling

him that I would take notes while we worked. This encounter began a writer-tutor

relationship that lasted three semesters, ending right before I was to leave for graduate

school and he was to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Business. Reflecting on that initial

meeting, I return to how I perceived the writing center space, how my perception changed

as a result of that reflection, and how unprepared I was when confronted with the kinds of

descriptions of human suffering Dominic included in his essay. As I read his paper out

loud, I remember this section in particular:

> The worst part in this journey was the river called Gilo. This river is on the
> Sudanese and Ethiopian border. The majority of these children did not
> know how to swim and the enemy did not give them a chance to use the
> boat. Each of them has to choose one option whether he will die through
> gunshot or otherwise drown in the river.

I felt uncomfortable. I knew this was his story, and it was difficult to read. I was not sure

what we would be able to talk about afterward. Textbook writing center pedagogy made

me ill-prepared to confront my contradictory reactions to this passage. I was familiar with

some of the descriptions in his essay. Similar images are continually circulated in the

American popular press, especially as representations of Africa. But, my understanding

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[1]   A pseudonym.

of refugee experience was always mediated, always removed and distanced, always made sense of as something that happened "out there." The stories I knew of refugee experience were always produced specifically for a certain kind of consumption in the U.S. The following passages represent the kinds of discourses of power I examine in this project and how they should be complicated by the actual stories refugees tell. These passages are meant to describe the dominant assumptions about spaces of literacy learning and refugee experience. I juxtapose them to illustrate how my sense of the writing center was unsettled by my experience working with Dominic.

Writing center space is often understood as distinct from classroom space and is almost always constructed as safe and inclusive. For example, in "Catching Our Tail: A Writing Center in Transition," Ralph Wahlstrom describes the furnishings of his ideal writing center:

> My ideal center … is a place in which theory meets practice in smooth linen folds, where informality meets professionalism … and where espresso and Earl Grey tea sit side by side always fresh and pungent, always hot. My writing center is equipped with computer carrels, islands of creative people and the software and machines that give them the power to create wonderful text. (95)

It would not be a stretch to say that my fellow tutors and I had similar desires for our own, quaint New England writing center. We often fantasized about tearing down one of the walls to build a solarium that opened into a garden. But, in some ways, Wahlstrom's description betrays a raced, classed, perception of writing center space. For instance, Gellar et al. observe how most writing centers have a predominantly white staff. Like

other institutional spaces, writing centers suffer from "everyday manifestations of deeply embedded logics" of racism (87). Because of these logics, tutors and other writing center community members sometimes inadvertently express "some implicit sense of what a 'real' tutor looks like" (88). In our idealized images of writing centers, we risk reproducing these logics. We imagine a white space without intending to do so.

In contrast to this white-washed space in Wahlstrom's description are the stories written about refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan. When I worked with Dominic on his essay of refugee experience, he showed me (and later gave me copies of) some of the popular magazine articles he used for his research. These articles repeatedly called attention to the fact that the Lost Boys' prior experience with formal education had been entirely in refugee camps. Their teachers were mostly aid workers and volunteers who taught English but often were not native English speakers. The variety of English spoken by the Lost Boys, as described by the authors of these articles, was a "stilted, archaic English passed on from missionaries" (Barry), implying that education in the refugee camp was deficient and outdated. Authors also draw correlations between these observed lacks, the Lost Boys' physical appearance, and their perceived disorientation with modern technology:

> [B]one-thin African boys [were] confronted by a swirling river of white faces and rolling suitcases, blinking television screens and telephones that rang, inexplicably from the inside of people's pockets. Here they were, uncertain of even the rug beneath their feet, looking for this place called Gate 31. (S. Corbett 48)

While I address the assumptions embedded within these depictions of the Lost Boys later

in this project, such imagery is useful for showing a contrast to the idealized writing center, a space which could have been just as easily encountered as a "swirling river of white faces." Certainly, our small, New Hampshire college campus was not known for its racial, ethnic, or linguistic diversity. I wonder how truly inclusive our dreams of solariums and espresso makers were to students who had been described as "uncertain of even the rug beneath their feet." Regardless of whether the Sudanese students I met actually felt the way Corbett says they do, that cell phones and televisions were like some sort of magic of the "modern" world, I wonder if the writing center, full of white faces and fluent English speakers, was really the kind of space we should have been idealizing. Perhaps we should have tried to imagine something different, something more global in scope. I know we envisioned that space to be inclusive, that we considered ourselves to be peers to the writers who used our services, but I think we did so in narrow terms, terms that failed to acknowledged our racial and linguistic privilege. If we do not acknowledge our privilege, we make it difficult to understand the contexts from which students come to the writing center.

I present descriptions of the physical appearance of the Lost Boys, their perceived lacks in education, the variety of English they spoke, and their seeming confrontation with "modernity" as examples of what refugee studies scholar Malkki terms the "standardized discursive forms" that are used to portray refugees, especially by mainstream journalism and popular media ("Speechless Emissaries" 386). As literacy sponsors, we are well-versed in descriptions of refugees that take these forms. When I first worked with Dominic, I was young and inexperienced, isolated and not adequately prepared to make constructive sense of the many discourses of power about refugees I

brought to our tutoring session. It is hard to say what I really knew about this place called "Africa," about Sudan, or about English language acquisition at that time. Not knowing or not being able to describe what I knew is the trouble with literacy sponsorship in these contexts; they are difficult to identify.

Descriptions of an idealized writing center space use discourses of power about spaces of literacy learning that can exclude students like Dominic, students whose lived experiences might not fit within the community we envisioned. The context of reading Dominic's story in his own words while sitting next to him worked to unsettle my previously held though seldom acknowledged assumptions. It is difficult for me to describe, though. On the one hand, I want to express how important this experience was to my development as a tutor, teacher, and researcher. On the other hand, I am aware of how my use of Dominic's story commodifies his words. Refugee stories are often commodified to support a liberal agenda wherein people who sponsor refugees gain a sense of superiority from uplifting the Other. Sponsors seldom acknowledge the power involved in acts of sponsorship. Perhaps I also gain something. I am a more self-aware and reflective teacher because of my experience working with Dominic. But, I also worry that I might be exploiting his story and the stories of my participants for the benefit of my professional identity.

Self-reflection can sometimes produce a feedback loop of anxiety. We should be careful not to undo any of the productive moments in literacy sponsorship by focusing too much on ourselves. Therefore, it has been important for me to learn from theory, to merge theory and practice in order gain perspective. Therefore, after graduate work in composition and feminist theory combined with working with diverse student populations

and reconnecting with refugee communities, my perspective on ideal spaces of writing has changed. "Quaint" has come to mean "white," and "espresso" reminds me of the colonial legacies of resource exploitation in Africa. I have grown to reject the idea of an "out there." Now, I question the degree to which idealistic descriptions of writing centers and similar spaces of literacy sponsorship are truly inclusive. I question to what extent "smooth linen folds" smooth out inequality.

To perceive "out there" as disconnected from "here," or in academic terms, to describe the global and the local as discrete sites of inquiry, has been the subject of critique in contemporary composition scholarship. Out there is actually dependent upon here, upon the everyday, material realities of people's lives. Critiques of the global-local binary represent a new direction for the discipline of rhetoric and composition studies, best summarized by Hesford, who observes how "An interest in global studies and transnational cultural studies is growing across the intersecting fields of rhetoric and composition" (788). According to Hesford, scholars have begun to address "the institutional scenes and legacies of globalization, exploring how economic globalization has led to a shift in the university's sense of itself and of its mission" (788). Hesford refers to the move to situate rhetoric and composition within the contexts of globalization as a "global turn" for the discipline. This scholarship has revisited several long-standing debates in the field, such as the accommodation of the increasingly international populations found in U.S. college writing classrooms (Matsuda); the debate over the use of "home" language varieties in student writing (V. Young, Canagarajah); the extent to which literacy is linked with liberal ideals of "citizenship" (Brandt, Wan); and the role first-year composition programs play in the preparation of students entering the

globalizing job market (Lu and Horner).

Despite careful and conscientious inquiry into the transnational implications for composition, scholars have yet to apply a global perspective to the literacy learning experiences of resettled refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan or the students I interviewed. Their potential contributions have largely remained unattended. In other words, the experiences of resettled refugees, as well as the work of the volunteers, aid workers, tutors, and teachers who work with them, do not fit neatly within composition's current paradigms for studying literacy in global-local contexts. But, the perspectives of resettled refugee students and writers, and more precisely the challenges they pose, can help composition scholars and teachers rethink our established modes of inquiry.

Transnational composition provides several opportunities for studying the literacy-learning experiences of refugees, including an emphasis on studying the "commodification" of the English language (Horner, Prendergast) and an attention to the circulation of the English language within global systems of inequality (Brandt). This body of work conceptualizes English not only as a language with multiple and competing uses, but also as an ideology that operates according to multiple and competing logics. As a resource providing an interdisciplinary perspective, refugee studies demonstrates how the category of "refugee," like "English," is also subject to commodification. For example, English literacy has been an ongoing endeavor within refugee camps. As refugees seek asylum in countries like the U.S., they are told about the kinds of stories that garner refugees the most positive kinds of attention. When students and writers are identified as "refugees from Africa," assumptions about their abilities and their backgrounds add up exponentially. These beliefs draw the boundaries around the

space refugee students and writers are allowed to live and learn, regulating and posing

limits to their physical and rhetorical mobility.

The potential intersections between composition and refugee experience can be

observed most easily within analyses of the multiple contexts of citizenship (Wan),

transnationalism (Hesford), and "rhetorics of displacement" (Powell). However, work

that engages these topics alludes to but does not explicitly address refugee experience or

consider the perspectives of scholars in the field of refugee studies. When refugee

experience is included, such as in Powell's rhetorical analysis of displacement, it is

considered in relation to complex and shifting identity formations. A direct discussion of

how literacy is implicated in the lives of refugees has yet to be taken up by rhetoric and

composition scholars. Because we emphasize reflective writing in our composition

classes, we also seem to be in a unique position to explore the kinds of strategies of

appropriation refugee writers practice. For example, the refugee students in this project

often appropriate popular or mainstream representations of refugee identity and then

recast them in strategic ways, sometimes to exploit currents of cultural capital such as

when they choose to tell stories according to their audiences' expectations, sometimes to

question said expectations—all dependent upon their understanding of the rhetorical

situation.

Refugee students and writers have a complicated relationship with citizenship. A

prevalent theme in literacy research is to examine how people use literacy to participate

as citizens. For example, Brandt studies the everyday literacy practices of what she calls

"ordinary citizens" ("Sponsors of Literacy" 166), but refugees occupy subject positions

that are Othered by the assumed values attached to citizenship. Refugees are instead

considered in contrast to the citizen, defined as "non-citizens," or to rework Brandt's description, "*extra*-ordinary" citizens. Refugee experience can complicate popular understandings of citizenship in productive ways. Similarly, literacy sponsorship itself crosses borders, both concrete and abstract. For example, sponsorship can be found in instances where refugees cross national borders, such as when asylum seekers are required to tell stories of their persecution in order to achieve refugee status and then be resettled into host countries like the U.S. (Bohmer and Schuman). The Lost Boys of Sudan document their feelings of anxiety when telling their own stories to immigration officials. Borders are also drawn between ideas, such as the perceived differences between "Africa" and the U.S. I have also observed an abstract border imagined by literacy sponsors separating education in refugee camps from U.S. classrooms, and while this border is a social construction, it has real consequence for the ways in which sponsors interact with refugee students.

Ignored, silenced, suspect, celebrated, "lost," or cast in doubt, refugees who went to school in refugee camps and were then resettled in the U.S. provide unique insight into the dynamic power structures of literacy sponsorship. Because of the complex network of processes governing refugee resettlement, careful attention to refugee experience can help composition teacher-scholars come to more complex understandings of English literacy. If the field of rhetoric and composition is committed to situating literacy research within the interdisciplinary frameworks of "transnational global studies," as Hesford describes, then the very terms *transnational* and *global* need to be approached from broad, inclusive, and interdisciplinary perspectives. Refugee studies is a useful place to start because it is an area of study that complicates the language about

globalization composition scholars borrow from other disciplines. In addition, if rhetoric and composition continues to take seriously the need to position composition pedagogy and the project of U.S. college writing within global contexts, then the approaches we use to examine the many converging cultures and identities of writers, such as border-crossing, multilingualism, and citizenship, require the complications posed by the voices and experiences of refugee students and those who work with them. Whether in the classroom or in the field, the literacy-learning experiences of refugee students and writers are valuable resources for reconsidering pedagogy, research, and sponsorship.

A unifying trait among the composition scholars reviewed in this chapter is the way they borrow language from other disciplines in an effort to address subjects such as transnationalism and globalization. Generally, I find the term *transnational* to be useful for bringing new perspectives to ongoing conversations in composition, but postcolonial feminist theory and contemporary globalization studies demonstrate how the term has conflicting and contradictory uses. Feminist theory critiques the popularization of transnationalism and globalization for perpetuating myths about citizenship. Alexander and Mohanty demystify such myths, claiming they circulate an un-gendered, un-raced, heteronormative figure that has been attached to forms of democracy directly linked to the merits of capitalism (xxxi). When applied to culture, for example, *transnational* can sometimes be conflated with what is often taken to mean "multicultural," which Inderpal Grewal argues has been appropriated for contemporary conceptions of the "American dream" in an effort to capitalize on an increasingly diverse consumer class (7). In other cases, anthropologist Ted C. Lewellen observes how people might lay claim to several national subjectivities at once, forcing us to reconsider the relationship between identity

and migration and asks us to re-imagine the idea of community, rearticulating ideologies of "home" through diasporic "hybrid" identities and new forms of "global citizenship" (151).

Transnational has also been used to describe a nation-state with newly porous borders made possible by advances in transportation and information technologies (Giddens 75). In this case, the concept of permeability can naively slip into tropes of a romanticized "borderless" world, a view informed by liberal ideals of citizenship despite the increase in conservative immigration policies around the globe. In Hesford and Kozol's review, they explain how some uses equate transnational with logics of "neocolonialism," implying a global "Americanization" of cultures and a perception of the English language as the most "natural" and "efficient" language of the "free" market. In contrast, Hesford and Kozol also explain that transnational can be thought of in response to or as speaking back to these homogenizing effects (14). Specifically in relation to composition, uses of the term vary between rhetorics of assimilation and rhetorics of individual agency, a range in meanings that can be complicated by the inclusion of refugee experience.

Because uses of terms like transnational and globalization can sometimes be contradictory, my treatment of "transnational composition" is arranged as a genealogy of five keywords: global, mobility, citizenship, sponsor, and emissary. Raymond Williams, for instance, explains his own work with keywords as "the record of an inquiry into a vocabulary: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions" (15). Examining concepts as keywords helps establish a framework for the various uses and limitations of each idea, which can then be revisited through new perspectives, in this

case, the experiences of refugee students and writers. Keywords can show a link between academic conceptions of the term in question and its use in everyday discourse.

I have divided these keywords into two sections. The first section reviews the terms *global*, *mobility*, and *citizenship*, exploring the ways in which transnational processes have been described in composition studies via the terms *sponsor* and *literacy*. The second represents my contribution to the conversation on literacy. In the first section, I use these words to unpack those competing and contradictory meanings attached to "transnational" that I have discussed above. Each of these words has a range of meanings specific to transnationalism and globalization, but each is also used by rhetoric and composition scholars to describe the goals of U.S. college composition. The second section examines the keywords *sponsor* and *emissary*, which I argue can be used to describe the relationships that refugee students and writers have with U.S.-based literacies, the English language, and composition pedagogy. While the first three terms are intended to outline a structure of transnational study, the terms *sponsor* and *emissary* help outline my own contribution to transnational perspectives in composition studies and literacy research.

As teacher-scholars continue the project of transnational composition, they seek to position the U.S. college composition within the transnational processes of globalization. Literacy sponsorship on both global and local scales can be reworked according to and informed by an ethics of working in refugee communities. Pulling back the smooth white linens of our institutional spaces and reimagining an inclusive, self-aware, and globally literate learning environment can afford us sufficient grounds to enact a more reflective, ethical, and responsible approach to understanding literacy-

learning in refugee communities as well as in the promotion of literacy more generally.

Key Terms

Keywords: Global, Mobility, and Citizenship

Theories of globalization generally posit that our perspectives have become more *global* in scope, that our everyday lives have seen an increase in *mobility*, and that these two phenomena have led us to consider new configurations of *citizenship*. More specifically, these three keywords are also used to describe the purposes of contemporary composition programs and literacy projects. In this context, *global* is associated with the international marketplace and the need for students to be versed in cross-cultural communication. But, globalization itself remains a difficult phenomenon to describe clearly, and those who try are vexed by metaphors which can only approximate global processes and their effects. *Mobility* can describe the forces by which students enter a globalizing job market. *Mobility* also indicates the abilities and capacities of people to move through space, crossing borders both concrete and abstract. *Citizenship* often represents an end goal: sometimes seen as productive membership in a legitimate nation-state, sometimes regarded as idealized participation in a globalizing society (when the modifier *global* is attached to the term, for instance). *Citizenship* is both a legal status as well as a political construct. These two meanings can produce competing definitions, especially for people who have ambivalent relationships with the term as they negotiate both the official and symbolic requirements of the term (M. Young). In what follows, I unpack these terms in relation to both contemporary composition scholarship and approaches in other disciplines. When appropriate, I show how these issues can be

complicated by the perspectives of refugee students and writers.

Global

Scholars who employ terms like *transnational* or attempt to apply theories of globalization to lived experience continually run into the inadequacy of metaphor. My treatment of the term *global* culls through some of the most prominent metaphors of globalization that are used or examined by contemporary rhetoric and composition scholars. Globalization itself is a figure of speech, a trope perhaps akin to metonymy in the way it is a "substitution of some attributive or suggestive word for what is actually meant" (E. Corbett 446). And, as Lakoff and Johnson observe, because metaphor is systemic, "we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study…the metaphorical nature of our activities" (7). In this case, globalization refers to an array of processes that appear to operate within a global system. This is not necessarily a case of using one part to describe the whole, but is instead "referential" (Lakoff and Johnson 36). That is, "globalization" is a term that attempts to describe a global system of advanced capitalism and neo-liberal economic policy that is constantly spreading and is entwined with (or by) the increased efficiency of technological communications and transportation. Globalization is also constituted by forms of cultural imperialism such as the ascendancy of English as a global language.

The metonymy of globalization is generally arranged according to theoretical constructs such as process/product, circulation/borders, space/place, etc. The term *global* can be better understood in the contexts of composition studies through a discussion of the metaphors used to describe globalization, particularly "flow," "network," and

"ecology." Here, the comparison is used to help us understand concrete, though complex, processes. However, on the ground observations of everyday life as in the case of refugee experience disrupts the "implied comparison between two things of unlike nature" that metaphor seeks to describe (E. Corbett 444). The metaphors most used to describe what the term *global* has come to mean appear to fall short of how these abstract logics are lived out in everyday, material ways. Through this breaking down of metaphor, I examine the material and contradictory effects globalization has on literacy.

The most prominent of these metaphors is used to describe how resources like capital, people, raw materials, security, culture, and language seemingly "flow" through and across nation-state borders. But, the imagery of the "flow" metaphor implies frictionless motion, fluidity, and smooth, uninterrupted movement across space. Flow is perhaps a vestige of Reagan-Thatcher neoliberal economic doctrine that prescribes how capital *should* flow unfettered across the globe through policies of free trade, but as David Harvey argues, this is more an ideal of the economically elite than an observation of how global capitalism behaves (19-21). Even a cursory examination of global structures of inequality reveals that capital and other resources only "flow" to those in power rather than in any kind of egalitarian, "liberal" sense, covering the globe in an ocean of prosperity. A rhetoric of "flows" implies that nation-state boundaries are porous and more easily crossed than in the past. The problem is that this is only true for *some* resources, regions, and people *some* of the time.

John Trimbur problemetizes the flow metaphor as it manifests in the context of the global spread of the English language. In "English in a Splintered Metropolis: South Africa After Apartheid," Trimbur surveys the literature on globalization and late 20th

century capitalism, most notably Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*. Trimbur critiques *Empire* from a rhetorical perspective, calling attention to an unquestioning use of the flow metaphor: "These breathtaking (and sometimes breathless) accounts of global flows have become standard in thinking about the configuration of economic, political, and cultural activity in the post-1989 period" (112). Even across disciplines, few question the flow metaphor. For example, refugee studies scholar Peter Nyers identifies six "flows" of particular relevance to theorizing refugee experience: capital, labor, goods, services, information, and culture (xi). Transnational composition studies shows how language and literacy can be included in this lists like this because they are likewise circulated transnationally. The English language, especially, seems to be effectively commodified and unfettered in its dissemination.

Drawing from Ferguson's critique of the flow metaphor, Trimbur argues that it would be more accurate to describe the movement of resources as a "point-to-point connectivity" unevenly distributed across geographic landscapes (qtd. in Trimbur 113). Ferguson illustrates these "point-to-point connectivities" through the metaphor of "hopping," which he proposes as a remedy for the seeming evenness the flow metaphor implies. Ferguson finds "hopping" useful for describing how capital "does indeed crisscross the globe" but "does not encompass or cover it" (37). These movements "jump from point to point, and huge regions are simply bypassed," and according to Ferguson, capital "hops, neatly skipping over most of what lies between" (38). However, I question the image of "hopping" as well, a critique Trimbur does not take up. While capital is observed to "hop" and "bypass" certain regions, what is not fully described are the actual relationships between the movement of resources like capital and the specific geographic

locations that seem to be ignored, or what could be referred to more simply as a link between the global and the local. Areas that are seemingly "skipped over," areas like South Sudan—destroyed by civil conflict fueled by a transnational arms trade—do not actually exist in isolation from the transnational processes of globalization. The hopping metaphor seems to imply that certain geographic locations lie outside of capitalism when they are an integral part of the capitalist system. The idea of "dependency theory," though burdened by its own limitations, has helped scholars see that "development and underdevelopment are reverse sides of the same coin" (Knox, Agnew, and McCarthy 65). That is, the geographic "points" which benefit from global "flows" or "hopping" do so *only because* other points and regions are dispossessed.

In almost every instance, on-the-ground observations of refugee experience and the policies that govern their lives, complicate metaphors of the global. For example, refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan did not exactly "flow" from South Sudan to Kenya to the United States. Instead, their cross-border movement took place entirely through a process of coercion. These metaphors also come up short when trying to describe the circulation of language and culture. For example, much of South Sudan is Christian. Despite being "hopped over" in terms of international trade and foreign investment, large movements of white, English missionaries certainly did not "hop" over South Sudan in their efforts to "convert the natives." Only discourses of power about refugees could be said to "flow." While capital might "hop," discourses of power do, in fact, seem to "flow" across borders and around refugee experience as assumptions about refugees follow them from place to place, shaping their interactions with people and institutions.

Another global metaphor meant to describe "point-to-point connectivity" is the

"network," most often invoked to describe the effect 21st century digital communications

technology has on the economic processes of globalization. This metaphor seems most

applicable to how information has proved to be an especially valuable commodity that is

traded on a global scale at a lightning fast pace. A useful analysis of the network

metaphor can be found in Rebecca Dingo's "Linking Transnational Logics" wherein she

examines the "gender-mainstreaming policies" developed by organizations like the

World Bank. Dingo explains how Policies such as the Personal Responsibility and Work

Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 sought to bring gender equality into the

"mainstream" of public policy-making, but were ultimately "uneven" and set the stage

for the privatization of social programs which "adversely affected women" (491).

Analyzing these policies, Dingo theorizes "transnational rhetorical networks," asking

feminist rhetoricians to observe a "networked relationship among texts," to see that the

texts of these policies are "transnationally linked through complex relationships among

gendered logics, power, and occasion" (492). The network metaphor makes sense at this

level of analysis—the movement of texts through transnational organizations which

operate in multiple geographic locations.

The most useful aspect of the network metaphor is its emphasis on relationships

of power. Dingo explains how "linear models of globalization do not account for the

exchange or dispersal of the transnational logics that shape domestic policies" (492).

However, I must note how the imagery of the "network" metaphor still implies a smooth,

frictionless, instantaneous transmission of texts, but unlike the flow metaphor, it

acknowledges that the distribution of resources/texts is asymmetrical. According to

Dingo, "Transnational networks symbolize the concentration of economic and political

power of some countries and limitations on others" (493). Some points in the network, that is, some nations and organizations, have more power to design and maintain these networks than others, while other points "receive" the texts circulated. The ways in which texts are circulated, though, still implies a "permeability of nation-state borders" (493), which may be true at the policy level, but because of the asymmetrical relations of power, this permeability usually only operates unidirectionally. Organizations like the World Bank, IMF, or even the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have the power to act unilaterally.

Dingo applies a distinctly rhetorical emphasis to the network metaphor. That is, she focuses on the "relationships between texts and occasions" (494). Dingo argues, "rhetoricians can use the network to articulate the complex ways that rhetorical appeals reach a diffused yet linked audience, while also accounting for how contiguous power relationships add meaning and force to arguments" (494). But, the people these policies affect are not necessarily the audience for these texts, and so the "power relationships" in the contexts of refugee experience are acutely "diffuse" because international organizations like the UN pass down policies to those who have few rights and little power to interpret them.

The experiences of the Lost Boys of Sudan illustrate how the network metaphor plays out in the lives of refugees, especially in how asymmetrical relations of power "add meaning and force" to the policies of refugee aid and resettlement. For example, as the Lost Boys attempted to negotiate the terrain of various humanitarian aid and immigration policies, they felt a great deal of anxiety, frustration, and uncertainty. In his account of the Lost Boys' story, journalist Mark Bixler explains how the U.S. State Department

needed to "define the group" of South Sudanese refugees. According to Bixler, among

thousands of refugees from South Sudan who came to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya,

many fit the criteria for "refugee" differently. For various political reasons, the U.S.

wanted to resettle only the orphaned children who had come to Kakuma before 1995, but

as Bixler explains, "Being a member of the group did not mean a ticket to the United

States. It simply got an interview with an INS officer in the camp. The INS would judge

whether a person had a well-founded fear of persecution" (89). But, the interview process

proved problematic because as word spread among the Lost Boys, so did anxiety and

suspicion, and they began to "pool" their stories together into what they thought would be

the most persuasive to the INS officers. Bixler explains how the Lost Boys "told nearly

identical stories about being forced from home by attacks around age six, seven, eight, or

nine. The uniformity made it virtually impossible to tell how many Lost Boys actually

left home under such circumstances" (89). Any seeming fluidity in the network of

humanitarian aid policy was disrupted by local understandings of that policy, thus show

how networks can include gaps in communication. The Lost Boys did not know sharing

stories with each other would increase the culture of suspicion surrounding refugee

resettlement, nor were the intentions of the resettlement policies effectively

communicated to them.

In a sense, the Lost Boys had occasion to interpret these resettlement policies, but

their interpretations were outside of the policy's intent. Their interpretation occurred

mostly through rumor or was mediated through aid workers—outsiders who could not

control the air of suspicion surrounding a policy's implementation. Policies that affect the

lives of refugees are often communicated unilaterally from the top down and do not

easily lend themselves to interpretation by those they affect. A theory of "transnational rhetorical networks" does not wholly translate to the policies as they are communicated, or more often, *not* communicated to refugee camps and/or communities. Such audiences might not have the occasion to interpret policy-driven texts even while they are affected by them.

Similar to the network metaphor but implying a more "natural" or "organic" process is the metaphor of "ecology." Many scholars in composition have employed an ecological model for studying literacy and writing, though not always for the purposes of analyzing the processes of globalization. In "Globalization, *Guanxi*, and Agency: Designing and Redesigning the Literacies of Cyberspace," Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe use the literacy narratives of two women, one from China and one from Taiwan, and their experiences learning and working with digital communication technologies to show how "People exert powerful agency, both individually and collectively, in, around, and through digital literacies" (72). Hawisher and Selfe use the ecology metaphor to explain the "interdependent relationships" (57) through which "people continually design and redesign the local ecological patches they inhabit through literacy practices and values," specifically those used in relation to the Internet (72). The metaphor of ecology is meant to help illustrate this interdependence.

The benefits of the ecology metaphor lie in how it is meant to describe a messy interconnection of dependencies without implying any kind of evenness. Hawisher and Selfe's use of the of term "ecological patches," in fact, highlights the unevenness inherent in processes of globalization. Additionally, Hawisher and Selfe emphasize how their research participants used literacy "to communicate within and between cultures" (58).

But, ecology appears to rely too heavily on the notion of the active individual residing at the center of a system. The power to design and redesign may be observable in the lives of Hawisher and Selfe's participants, but assigning agency to an individual in a system can be tricky for researchers and is often a highly inconsistent practice. For instance, linguistic anthropologist Laura M. Ahearn argues that agency too often remains undefined, and "scholars often fail to recognize that the particular ways in which they conceive of agency have implications for the understandings of personhood, causality, action, and intention" (112).

Similarly, Shereen Inayatulla argues that researchers and teachers should revisit their own reading practices when ascribing agency to the protagonist of a literacy narrative, especially when discussing cultural difference because when they do so, they risk reproducing "other kinds of inequalities" (42). This is not to say that Hawisher and Selfe grant unchecked agency to the narratives of their participants. They acknowledge how the ecological system also "clearly shaped the lives of these two women, their language resources, and the digital literacy practices they have acquired and valued" (69). At the same time, the genre of the literacy narrative, because it is always a rhetorical construction shaped by the researcher, can prove problematic for granting agency to individuals within these ecologies. And, because "ecology" implies a natural and organic system, it is a metaphor that has trouble accounting for the ways in which the larger system is itself a product serving those in power.

A complication posed to the ecological metaphor is the example of the KANERE Free Press newsletter/blog that is published by refugee writers in Kakuma refugee camp. Michele James-Deramo reports on how KANERE uses digital literacy technologies

(mostly in English), to publicize art, editorials, human rights abuses, and distrust of occupying aid organizations in the camp. KANERE, however, operates in an ecology that is anything but "organic" in that the agency of the writers and editors is constantly being constrained by outside forces operating transnationally. Because KANERE also depends on humanitarian aid, the UNHCR believes that it has a right to be involved in its publication. KANERE, like any free press, desires to operate independently, to be a voice for the refugees in the camp, and the UNHCR is often the subject of critique (James-Deramo). The limits within which KANERE operates are designed and enforced by aid organizations as well as national and international bodies. Attempts to critique and change those structures are continuously silenced. There is nothing "natural" about the UNHCR's argument to be involved in the publication of refugees' voices and perspectives.

If these metaphors prove insufficient, then what language should composition scholars and literacy researchers use to frame their inquiries within global contexts? A. Suresh Canagarajah refers to the "center/periphery" metaphor to frame the geopolitical implications of his research, arguing that "'Center' refers to the technologically advanced communities of the West, which at least in part, sustain their material dominance by keeping less developed communities in periphery status" (4). While this model has been critiqued for reinforcing First/Third World binaries, critiques are often aimed at how the nation-state has been constructed as a homogeneous space. Canagarajah's emphasis on communities rather than nations illustrates that center and periphery do not always indicate solely nation-state relations. That is, within any nation-state there are many centers and many peripheries in addition to the global relations of inequality and histories

of political and material dominance.

Canagarajah frames his inquiry in a self-reflective manner. That is, instead of arguing that a center/periphery model resolves the problems posed by metaphors of the global, he explains why it is useful to his particular project then acknowledges that other models, like Wallerstein's "world systems perspective" have more "currency" (7). Canagarajah defers to the theories of Arjun Appudarai who defines globalization as a phenomenon which is "active across large and irregular transnational terrains" (9). Instead of working with definitions of the *global* that insist upon porous, borderless spaces and envision the contemporary as an era in which information as a commodity travels unabated across the globe, Appudarai explains how regardless of metaphor, the transnational processes of globalization are distinctly uneven and asymmetrical. He argues that "The complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics" (33). The metaphors that I have presented here, for example, rely upon seemingly uninhibited processes while trying to construct new understandings of the relationship between "local" and "global" scales of inquiry. Appudarai's observations emphasize how these processes are ones of "disjuncture." They do not merely describe a coming together or a unification of space and time, of resources and people, of nation and economy, but his observations also describe transnational processes which drive apart spaces, cultures, economies, and communities as they grow increasingly foreign to one another.

I have seen firsthand how refugee students struggle with the "disjuncture" of globalization. As they work to learn English as fast as they can, they also try to preserve their native languages and maintain connections with others in their diasporic

community. One third-grader I tutored expressed both a love for the English language and a pride in how many languages she spoke. She was especially proud of her father who spoke seven languages. Her educational experiences seemed to be compressed in her intensive study in the U.S., while her sense of community crossed vast geographical distances. Here, the messy unevenness expressed through the ecological metaphor is useful because this student draws from resources and experiences that are at times concentrated and at other times dispersed. This particular student identified as an immigrant, and legally, was not a refugee, yet her family came to the U.S. both to escape the same conditions other refugees were fleeing and to pursue education in the U.S.. The uneven effects of globalization drove her and her family to find a community among other refugees.

Specifically in relation to how composition studies has imagined the transnational contexts of our field, I return to Canagarajah's description of a global system because instead of arguing for one model or metaphor, he is careful to acknowledge the many competing perspectives used to describe globalization. Perhaps our goal as researchers is not to develop a single, unifying approach, but to study which approaches, philosophies, ideologies, and theories vie for attention in a given context. Similar in manner to Canagarajah, Lu and Horner use the hyphenated phrase "global-local" in order to place emphasis on "relationships" ("Composing" 114). Likewise, in their discussion of women's rights and human rights discourses, Hesford and Kozol reflect on their own use of terms explaining, "We use the term transnational feminism with full awareness of the various forms taken in its name" (14). I see, therefore, a need for self-reflective uses of terms meant to describe the complex processes of globalization. What I mean is that

while "flow" may be a useful term to describe how capital tends to permeate some nation-state borders in certain situations, the imagery of water and unimpeded movement should not be ignored and, in fact, poses problems for making connections between one particular "flow" and other processes of exploitation. Contextualizing language in this way is important for avoiding the dehistoricization of terms. As Appudarai reminds us:

> globalization is itself a deeply historical, uneven, and even *localizing* process. Globalization does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenization or Americanization, and to the extent that different societies appropriate the materials of modernity differently, there is still ample room for the deep study of specific geographies, histories, and languages. (17)

The link between technology and globalization seems to imply that we focus on what is "new" about these observed transnational relationships, but as Appudarai explains, attention should be paid to what is not new, what is actually the historical reproduction of global inequality and asymmetrical forms of power. In the same vein, Hesford describes "the contradictory effects of globalization" as having "polarizing as well as democratizing functions" (790). Transnational processes perpetuate inequality and continue to distribute resources unevenly across geographic landscapes, while some of the same processes have been observed to open spaces for resistance.

Composition programs can benefit from the perspectives I have outlined above. If we ask writing and rhetoric students to pay close attention to the metaphors they use when describing education and literacy we can deconstruct with them how metaphors of globalization find their way into everyday discourse, helping students develop a critical

awareness of their own language use. Using my critique of the ecological metaphor, I want students to think differently about how they make themselves the protagonist of their own literacy narrative. By discussing more intently their actual "ecologies," or the various "networks" of literacy sponsors in their lives, they can decenter authority in their narratives and simultaneously critique the dominant tropes of globalization. Writing programs can likewise implement a more global perspective in their approach to teaching writing. Rhetorical analysis can take into consideration how network and ecological models operate at different scales. My personal investment would be to have students deconstruct relationships of power, but they would also learn the valuable skill of negotiating between competing discourses. Economic globalization in the form of free market capitalism is devastating in its exploitation of the marginalized and impoverished, so we must view transnational processes in a wider sense, on multiple scales and in relation to language, culture, and identity. The dominant discourses and metaphors used to describe these processes tend to flatten these histories of inequality.

Mobility

In almost all its uses, the term *transnational* implies mobility, most often the movement of people, culture, language, capital, etc. across space and time, particularly across national boundaries. As Brandt argues, we should also consider literacy to be a mobile commodity. In terms of refugee experience, descriptions of the Lost Boys that draw parallels between their bodies and their education, between poverty and literacy, between lack and language are all discourses of power that have become, as Malkki states, "transnationally mobile" and "easily translated and shared across nation-state

borders" (386) *Mobility* has implications not only for the movement of goods and people, but also for the movement of discourses about those goods and people. Both the circulation of ideas and the movement of people are important for understanding the different uses *mobility*, as a key term, might be put to in rhetoric and composition studies.

Refugee experience is not necessarily unique in respect to standardized, transnationally mobile discourses of power. Other experiences, like those who might self-identify as "Third World" women, are similarly commodified. Postcolonial feminist scholars have proved that there are many discourses and "myths" about women which also circulate transnationally. These discourses include the gendered division of labor as well as the myth of Third World women as a disposable labor force (Wright) or exoticized, sexual fantasy (Brennan, Bales).

Some references to *mobility* in composition studies involve immigrant experience and studies involving students labeled ESL. In these cases, mobility is addressed within narratives of assimilation as students are asked to read and compose in English. Studying mobility in this regard is helpful for crossing the perceived borders between the literacy domains of "home" and "school." But, mobility operates in contradictory ways. That is, ESL students might be regarded has having been mobile in their immigrant or international identity, but they also risk remaining immobile if they do not adequately assimilate and learn English. ESL students are then seen to become mobile by their proficiency in English, which constitutes an understanding of mobility that Lu and Horner refer to as a "upward mobility," or the belief that the purpose of first-year composition is to prepare students to participate in an increasingly globalizing marketplace (120). In "Composing in Global-Local Contexts," Lu and Horner summon

the image of the "company man" for whom the meaning of *mobility* is "restricted primarily to 'moves up' the institution's hierarchical structure of responsibility and rewards" (121), or what is more commonly known as "climbing the corporate ladder." In this case, students are seen to be made mobile by their education, by the receipt of a degree that seems to act as a "passport" to the job market.

Composition scholars who study mobility not only study the mobility of people, but also the movement of language, especially English, as it crosses borders. The global movement of English is rife with the lingering effects of colonialism and thus carries with it legacies of domination. The movement of English is studied for its economic implications as well. As Catherine Prendergast puts it, "English has frequently been likened to a form of currency, one that can help markets function best for all participants by serving as a neutral medium for exchange" (6). English is a resource that crosses borders while it is also, Prendergast argues, a "lubricant" for the mobility of people (127).

However, very little research in composition has been done on those who either cannot move or are forced to move. Hesford, for example, alludes briefly to the problems of forced displacement when she writes, "we must bear in mind that mobility is not an option for many groups and populations and has in fact been forced on others" (790). Statements like this are common in both literacy research and globalization theory – refugee experience is alluded to in terms of displacement, but displacement is not differentiated. Drawing from the work of Zygmunt Bauman, I argue that mobility, especially forced mobility, has several important distinctions to consider. According to Bauman, one of the distinguishing characteristics of globalization is that mobility, specifically people's "degree of mobility," is an indicator of increasing global inequality

(86). Bauman goes so far as to argue that "access to mobility" is one of the "topmost" stratifying factors in a "new, emergent, stratification" (87). Therefore, the ability to move, to be mobile in this world, is itself a kind of resource that is unevenly distributed. *Mobility* presents a compelling problematic as a key term because while it can be used to describe the uneven distribution of resources, *forced mobility* represents more than the idea that those at the "top" are "mobile" and those at the "bottom" stay fixed to a "homeland."

Bauman sums up the problem of access to mobility best when he describes the idea that there are "two worlds" co-existing in the new global landscape. The first world, he explains, is "increasingly cosmopolitan," and in it "state borders are levelled down, as they are dismantled for the world's commodities, capital and finance"; while in the second world, "the walls built of immigration controls, of residence laws and of 'clean streets' and 'zero tolerance' policies, grow taller" (89). Moreover, the two worlds in this landscape do not communicate with one another (88). The lens of *mobility* is helpful for examining the unevenness, the inequality in which policy and global "flows" are realized. The "networks," if we were to use that metaphor, do not work the same for those who have differing degrees of access to mobility.

What it means to describe forced mobility or forced displacement is also rife with competing logics and discourse of power. In his general treatment of mobility, Bauman explains how "those 'low' down happen time and again to be thrown out from the site they would rather stay in" (86), which is a type of mobility more analogous to having a home which is "pulled from under their feet," and "If they take to the roads, then their destination, more often than not, is of somebody else's choice" (87). Bauman's

description helps illustrate what forced migration looks like, perhaps feels like, but what counts as forced is rarely defined in detail because displacement comes in so many forms. For example, Lewellen explains that, contemporary migration often "follows patterns of unequal development" and that the motivation behind such patterns is "economic betterment" (124). While a lack of economic opportunity is just as much a matter of survival as other forms of displacement, being forced from one's home for economic reasons does not fall under state-sanctioned logics of refugeeness.

Despite legal distinctions, economic migration and refugee migration seem to have more in common than is allowed by official definitions. In neither case is the final destination a choice, but is something dictated by the promise of "opportunity." Refugees are often depicted as getting a chance to start a "new life," that they are leaving one place for a much better place. While this may be true when considering only the contexts of violence and war, it is a perspective that oversimplifies the situation. It is also a perspective easily commodified by the dominant culture in a host country like the U.S. For example, in a class I taught on refugee narratives, students gravitated toward the rhetorics of hope and transformation, often lamenting that refugees are not given enough "cultural orientation" before making this transition. Stories written *by* refugees are expected to be told in such a way that the resettlement process can also seem hopeful. An unreflective logic of hope permeates peoples' responses to stories of refugee resettlement.

In a different light, considering what Lu and Horner describe as the focus "upward mobility" in the goals of college writing programs, *mobility* can be seen as a site of conflict for college composition students. Lu and Horner observe, for instance, that students have a significant degree of "ambivalence" toward the logic of upward mobility,

and this ambivalence includes feelings of "nostalgia, anger, [and] obligation" (120). As a first-generation college student, I have seen peers who express suspicion toward education. If students feel "anger" at the "obligation" of pursuing some kind of upward mobility, then this situation can be read as another way to interpret forced mobility. This is not to say that we should draw parallels between students entering the globalizing job market and the forced displacement experienced by migrant workers or refugees. I want to emphasize instead that what counts as forced grows increasingly complex as the motivations for movement grow increasingly diverse, which in turn poses problems for the ways in which literacy sponsorship is described and defined.

Mobility is a particularly important key term for transnational composition. In addition to Lu and Horner's treatment of having students explore "upward mobility," studying the mobility of people in different contexts can have students engage in analyzing the discourses that describe that mobility. I have met many students and teachers who do not know the official definition of the word "refugee," for example. Students in my classes and teachers at conferences have conflated the term with immigration more broadly. Studying the rhetorics of mobility would help students, teachers, and sponsors develop a vocabulary for better understanding the people around them. I want students to gain a more *global* perspective on the contexts in which they learn. Exploring the competing understandings of mobility helps me connect mobility to the discourses of power that shape literacy sponsorship. When sponsors find that they have a limited vocabulary for describing their work with refugee students, for example, they are experiencing a limitation to their "rhetorical mobility." When refugee students feel limited by their difficulty with the English language, they likewise experience their

rhetorical mobility being restricted. It would be important to study these situations in a composition classroom because students might see how different contexts are constrained by different and often competing discourses of power.

Citizenship

Hesford argues that rhetoric and composition scholars, despite embracing a more global perspective, have continued to "take for granted the nation-state and citizen-subject as units of analysis" ("Global Turns" 788). Issues surrounding citizenship pose problems for many composition students who are labeled as undocumented, immigrant, international, or refugee. Additionally, the question of citizenship and non-citizenship has become increasingly vexed in the U.S. generally. Refugee studies provides useful insight into the complexities of citizenship as seen through the lens of refugee subjectivity, both legal and political. Nyers, for instance, observes that "Conventional representations of refugeeness—both discursive and visual—cast the refugee as the mirror image of the citizen" (97). This "mirror image" is the face we do not want reflected in our own identities. In their everyday struggles with legal status and political space, refugees are often only measured against that which they are not perceived to be: sovereign citizens, historical actors, political agents (Nyers xiv). Neither is the nation-state, as Hesford implies, the only site of identity production. Liminal spaces like refugee camps also produce political subjectivities both attached to and distanced from legal and political conceptions of citizenship.

When educators discuss the need for a global perspective, they sometimes invoke the idea of the "global citizen." According to Robin Mason, for instance, educators might

work on "developing resources and international contacts to enable one's own students to become global citizens" (158). In this case, students in the U.S. are trained to be culturally savvy and thus more marketable to employers. Mason observes how trends in international education have continued to focus on exporting American curricula and considers training students to be global citizens as one alternative to that model.

The idea of the "global citizen" sometimes receives critique because while it is meant to describe an egalitarian or informed attitude toward global relations, it can easily flatten difference and ignore material realities. In my opinion, we might consider the Lost Boys to be global citizens, not because they have crossed the globe, but because they have navigated and become fluent in the bureaucratic discourses that constrain their mobility. These include INS interviews, and a glut of forms and applications. They have also coped with going to school under difficult conditions. As a U.S. citizen, I lack such knowledge and understanding about immigration and asylum, and while I believe that refugees should have less bureaucracy to deal with, such experience gives them a literacy of extremely complicated situations that would be an asset in a writing course.

Global citizenship, sometimes described as "universal citizenship" or "cosmopolitan citizenship," is typically considered a future ideal, an optimistic interpretation of a globalizing society, rather than an observed reality. As Alexander and Mohanty argue, ideals of global citizenship is typically betrayed by "very particular gender-, race-, class-, and sexually-specific contours," washing out difference in a way that maintains a privileged, white, masculine subjectivity as the measure of citizenship in its efforts to claim "universality" (xxxi). Refugees, for instance, are most often women and children of color who traverse borders in the "Third World," which places them in

stark contrast to any common conception of "global citizen," and thus the term *refugee* itself has been an object of feminist critique. Even though women and children of color are disproportionately affected by the geopolitics that produce refugee populations, Grewal observes how traditional representations of the refugee are of a "male subject" (159).

More abstractly, Hardt and Negri imagine a global political project in which they propose a version of "global citizenship" that grants the "full rights of citizenship in the country where [people] live and work," a reform that would be "in step with the real economic transformations of recent years" (400). The rights of global citizens would be "to control" their own movement, to move about freely across the globe "*sans papiers*" (400). Hardt and Negri imagine a global citizenry that is bound to space by labor rather than by seemingly deteriorating nation-state boundaries, by birth, or by marriage. While this is a compelling proposal in terms of immigration reform, Hardt and Negri's discussion lacks a substantial consideration of forced displacement, of spaces (like refugee camps) which are both bound and not bound to the nation-state and are subject to rule by the international community and various aid organizations. Hardt and Negri seem most concerned with relieving *mobility* from its standing as a material resource, alleviating the need to distribute mobility according to class and wealth.

The concept of global citizenship can also be used to describe a wider ethical and responsible perspective. While Hardt and Negri imagine a "global citizen" who has different legal rights from past renderings of citizenship, Hesford proposes a global citizenship coupled with a discourse of human rights that "gives substance to human rights and encourages intercultural and transnational dialogue" (795). Aihwa Ong makes

a similar proposal, describing a "cosmopolitan citizenship that can mediate between diverse traditions and communities on the global scale" (141). These reconceptualizations seem to make space for acknowledging refugee subjectivity as a political identity, but it is still unclear how the legal implications of refugee status would be addressed or how spaces like refugee camps either contribute to or resist the idea of global citizenship. It is also unclear how these renditions of citizenship respond to Alexander and Mohanty's critique of white, masculine universalism.

In the case of refugee students, citizenship is often regarded as a fixed goal, the result of a cross-border transformation. In addition to the concrete borders of the nation-state, refugee students can also cross abstract borders that seem to exist between spaces like a refugee camp and a college writing classroom. Individuals and organizations with the power to name refugee experience such as aid workers, teachers, and journalists often see this transformation as necessary because of the perceived relationship between citizenship and literacy. This relationship is a tenuous one, because, as Wan argues, uses of the term "citizenship" are often "ambient" in nature, but should be viewed as context-bound rather than universal (29). Wan identifies the "pervasive belief that citizenship is an achievable status by individuals who have the will for it" (29). In this view, literacy is seen as a way for refugee students to assuage the trauma of assimilation. That is, if refugees "have the will for it," literacy can be a tool of transformation, can help them assimilate for the purposes of "starting a new life," of attaining citizenship—gaining citizenship rather than losing a "home." More often the case, institutions and various sponsors "have the will" for transforming refugees into something manageable. They position this "new life" in the U.S. as inherently superior to the diverse experiences and

cultural backgrounds of refugee students and writers.

Attaching literacy to citizenship constitutes a liberal-centric view of the demands placed on refugees. Literacy is seen as empowering, yet required. Nowhere in this paradigm is literacy seen as a tool to challenge dominant constructions of citizenship. The "good citizen" is always held up against the non-citizen who is a "burden" on the system, i.e. the "refugee," the "undocumented," "the alien," etc. Literacy is seen as a necessary and positive aspect of cultural orientation. What is difficult to tease out, though, is that some of this is true, and the argument cannot be easily dismissed out of hand. Literacy can be helpful, can give people means to resist or make the system work for them. As well, legal citizenship can be a positive goal in the lives of refugees, but it should not be unreflectively imposed upon the refugee subject. In other words, citizenship is a liberal symbol of hope.

In addition to careful attention to how citizenship is defined, Wan argues that to gain a better understanding the role of citizenship in composition pedagogy, we should, identify the "multiple ways that habits of citizenship are encouraged through literacy learning" (45). In my own training as a teacher and tutor, literacy was also linked with this notion of the "good citizen." Examining the habits of "non-citizenship" is vital for examining and re-imagining the relationship between literacy and citizenship. This examination would seek literacy acts that challenge liberal-centric views of citizenship, would denaturalize citizenship as an end goal for refugee students, and would complicate the perceived space between the U.S. classroom and the refugee camp.

The terms *global*, *mobility*, and *citizenship* are words that have particular uses in and implications for composition studies. Sometimes, the complexities of the terms are

taken for granted or an agreement upon their use is assumed. This is not necessarily always problematic. In the case of metaphors of *global*, each has its uses and limitations. Some, like "network," seem particularly helpful for studying the circulation of texts. What is important to include in discussions of these terms is how such terms are complicated by the experiences of those that are excluded. I use these terms to construct a framework for studying the issues surrounding literacy more closely. By situating literacy in global contexts, I can examine the discourses of power about literacy that circulate transnationally. In the section that follows, I discuss terms that make a strong connection between global and local contexts of English language literacy: *sponsor* and *emissary*. I see these terms as being helpful for understanding the structures of power governing literacy in global contexts.

Keywords: Sponsor and Emissary

 Sponsor and *emissary* are useful for describing the relationships people have with literacy as they cross borders. *Sponsor*, for example, can be thought of in terms of Brandt's notion of "literacy sponsorship." In her more extensive ethnography, *Literacy in American Lives*, Brandt examines sponsorship that operates mostly within class, educational, and regional borders, and in these cases, literacy is often linked to "upward mobility" and rhetorics of hope. Brandt confines her research specifically to "American lives," so I find it important to examine sponsors who, to use her definition, are both "local" and "distant," whose literacy learning has taken place in transnational contexts.

 I introduce the term *emissary* to explore a different kind of relationship between literacy and individuals, one that is most prevalent in the lives of resettled refugee

students and writers. Journalists, aid workers, and teachers often construct the figure of the refugee as in need of transformation by U.S. educational practices and English-based literacy. Any literacy practices attached to the idea of a home in "Africa" or to going to school in a refugee camp are seen as deficient compared to American English education. But, refugee students and writers bring valuable strategies to these learning contexts which are either ignored or commodified. *Emissary* is a helpful term for articulating a more dialogic relationship between the literacy sponsor and those who are sponsored. *Sponsor* and *emissary* bring literacy into sharper focus in this project, but in this section, they are also analyzed in relation to the transnational processes that they are sometimes used to describe. That is, *sponsor* can describe systems of humanitarian aid distribution, and *emissary* can indicate how individual refugees are often called upon to represent and speak for the idea of refugee identity.

As a tutor, teacher, and community volunteer—as a literacy sponsor—I participate in the circulation of some of the discourses of power about literacy and refugee communities. There is a certain degree of tension implicit in this work, and several of the aid workers that I have interviewed express a concern of having to balance the needs of cultural sensitivity with the demands of English education. For example, I have often experienced this anxiety in my ESL and basic writing classes. Students need and want to succeed and meet academic expectations for writing, but I want to help them do so without devaluing the literacy practices and experiences that they already have, whether they include learning to read in a refugee camp in Kenya or speaking another language at home. Students learn best by having these competing logics made transparent. I take these issues up more explicitly in my discussion of *emissary*.

Sponsor

Many ethnographies of literacy have been conducted in international contexts, but most of these studies take place in a fixed locale rather than examine literacy as it crosses borders. Literacy scholars like Barton, Scribner and Cole, and Brandt focus on the everyday practice of literacy-learning, but in each case, their ethnographic focus is bound to a particular place and does not necessarily examine the mobility of literacy in transnational contexts. By examining literacy in relation to refugee experience, then, I can show how literacy sponsorship operates within transnational contexts.

According to Brandt, while the most visible manifestation of *sponsor* is often an individual like a parent or a teacher, *sponsor* can also refer to organizations and institutions as well—all the actors invested in the promotion of literacy-learning. It is important for literacy researchers and sponsors to acknowledge, as Brandt's definition illustrates, that sponsors always have something to gain from the promotion of certain brands of literacy. Literacy sponsors themselves have a stake in the act of sponsorship, have their own competing interests and agendas. The relationship between sponsor and sponsored is almost always asymmetrical because of the power associated with fluency in a dominant discourse. Thus, when we speak of inequality or asymmetrical relationships of power in the contexts of literacy, we can use literacy sponsorship to examine the dynamics of specific acts of literacy acquisition in order to make sense of the many currencies and consequences produced by the relationship between sponsor and sponsored.

Brandt argues that literacy should be regarded as a resource, as a "raw material"

(*Literacy* 6), because rather than being thought about in the abstract, as literacy often is, literacy should be made sense of in relation to material realities and experiences. Through this treatment of literacy as a resource, Brandt is able to make demonstrable connections between local acts of literacy, the larger institutions which appear to structure those acts, and the global processes informing those structures. Brandt explains, "Literacy, like land, is a valued commodity in this economy, a key resource in gaining profit and edge. This value helps to explain, of course, the lengths people will go to secure literacy for themselves or their children" (169). Brandt's approach is much more specific than merely listing literacy as yet another "global flow." The value that Brandt ascribes to literacy also applies to the lives of refugees resettled in the U.S. and is especially visible in the lives of the Lost Boys of Sudan. In these cases, the "lengths people will go" are often not choices made freely. For instance, in South Sudan, people subsist primarily on the economies surrounding sustainable agriculture. The education children receive at home reflects this. Learning English was thus only a consequence of having a previous existence ripped from them, of being thrust into the complex arrangement of asylum-seeking, host nations, and resettlement interviews. We should be suspicious of any argument that posits English literacy as an inherently good thing because in the experiences of the Lost Boys, the pursuit of literacy was wrought with violence, trauma, and displacement; it only seemed to provide security in relation to their new, refugee experience.

Using *sponsor* as a keyword to describe literacy in global contexts can be applied to several other practices not directly addressed in Brandt's work. For instance, when the Lost Boys first arrived in the U.S., they were paired with sponsors who helped them

acclimate to "American culture," which typically meant learning how to find a job, getting a driver's license, maintaining an apartment, visiting a doctor, shopping for groceries and clothes, enrolling in school, etc., each of which involved particular literacies and particular types of sponsorship, most often referred to by aid workers as "cultural orientation." Sponsorship of this sort is examined to some extent by literacy scholars at the local level, in situations where sponsor and sponsored have face-to-face contact. However, sponsorship can be more visibly transnational, as Erica Bornstein demonstrates in her research on child sponsorship programs in Africa.

While Bornstein's main focus is to look at the effects of religious-based ideology on child sponsorship since many non-governmental organizations who do this kind of work in Africa have a Christian mission, Bornstein's research helps show how the project of sponsorship creates relationships that appear to be transnational in nature. The overall goal of these organizations, Bornstein explains, is "to transcend economic disparity via personal relationships between individuals in 'developed' nations and the children they sponsor in 'less-developed' nations" (595). Such programs are familiar to U.S. audiences. Commercials for Save the Children, for example, claim that for the price of one cup of coffee per day, you can help a child go to school. Images of children, often in refugee camps, are intended to persuade the viewer that helping just one child can make a difference. Sponsored children then send letters to their sponsors about how these donations improved their lives. Implicit in the mission of these organizations is the problematic assumption that "developed" nations can and should "uplift" children in "less-developed" nations, and that this help only requires a fraction of one's daily spending. Bornstein acknowledges that what counts as developed is in fact not natural.

The resulting relationship between sponsor and child is complicated. First, it reproduces legacies of colonialism, operating as a kind of *neo*-colonial logic that assumes development is the responsibility of a white, middle-class, Western subjectivity. That is, "those who have money," in Bornstein's words, "purchase" a relationship with "those who must be sponsored" (597). Such projects can be critiqued for celebrating the charitable acts of "developed" nations, but as Bornstein shows, not all aspects of this relationship are negative. Bornstein explains that on the individual level, the sponsors, and sometimes the children, see themselves as becoming "part of transnational extended families," demonstrating how the relationship between sponsor and sponsored has managed to take place across national, cultural, economic, and even familial borders as programs and sponsors impose a Western family structure on this primarily economic relationship.

I am reluctant to read positive characteristics in examples like this because this kind of sponsorship involves such asymmetric relations of power. Sponsorship of this sort has a distinctly outward momentum constituting an imposition of western cultural norms and does not adequately rework the meaning of aid. Sponsoring a child is like a band-aid on an infected global wound. The circumstances that place children in conditions of poverty and violence are caused by global-political relations and are not remedied by sending small amounts of money. More importantly, this outward momentum involves forms of sponsorship circulating unidirectionally from privileged locations like the U.S., which implies that certain dominant brands of literacy are inherently better, a point of view that has been naturalized through processes of colonization and neoliberal economic policy. As a resource, literacy circulates "outward"

but not "inward" because literacy practices in places like South Sudan are seen as lacking.

Like Brandt, linguist Robert Phillipson regards literacy as a material resource. In his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, he discusses how U.S. brands of literacy and the teaching of English as a secondary language have been used as forms of international and humanitarian aid. Though Phillipson does not use the language of "sponsorship" specifically, he critiques the "donor-recipient" paradigm, referencing the contexts of Africa to illustrate how the field of English language teaching (ELT) reinscribes unequal relations of power (12).

While not homogeneous or monolithic in its practices, ELT operates according to several dominant logics, especially in the way it is positioned within "Center/Periphery" relations. These logics are not subtle. According to Phillipson, ELT "has been marketed as the language of development, modernity, and scientific and technological advance" and is promoted to support "the learning of English for science and technology," "English as a medium for education in schools," and "technical training for particular development goals" (11). Examining the global implications of language sponsorship, Phillipson draws attention to how literacy is a commodity "exported" to the periphery by the U.S. and other First World, English-speaking countries. This project promotes certain brands of literacy as being acceptable and expected in the "developed" world, and proponents are uncritical of the kinds of racist, sexist, and class-based assumptions literacy sponsorship carries with it when imposed upon those who are perceived to be deficient and in need of being sponsored.

In these instances of child sponsorship and literacy as a form of aid, the continent

of Africa is continually seen as a the stereotype of what it means to be "underdeveloped." We continually see "Africans" as the archetype for what it means to be "those who must be sponsored." These assumptions bleed into everyday discourse. Africa is used as a hallmark of poverty and illiteracy, so much so that the entire continent is misconstrued as one, homogeneous place. When I bring a story about the Lost Boys of Sudan to class, my students have repeatedly referred to Africa as a "country," a misrepresentation that the refugee resettlement agency I work with also finds itself continuously having to correct. As I discussed more fully in the introduction to this project, this misconception is not merely a symptom of American isolationism and geographical illiteracy, but is also a symbolic reproduction of images of Africa repeatedly shown to us, images that only show Africa as a backwards, violent, ancient, diseased, and illiterate place. Africa is even used by parents in the U.S. to persuade children to finish dinner. In the 1980s, famine in Ethiopia was often brought up at my family dinner table when I was a picky eater at the dinner table. We would also sing along to Michael Jackson's "We Are the World" record.

The interplay between sweeping generalizations of "Africa" and the specific stories of refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan illustrates how sponsors of literacy perceive the needs and desires of those they feel "must be sponsored." Sponsorship in these cases takes on a severely unidirectional momentum on both local and global scales. Certain commodified brands of literacy are either exported from English-speaking countries to places like Africa or simply imposed upon refugees like the Lost Boys as they are expected to adopt the literacy practices uncritically valued in U.S. classrooms. In neither case are the previous learning experiences of African refugees seen as valuable; they are only regarded as obstacles to the goals of English language education. The real

work of a *sponsor*, I argue, involves much more than passing on knowledge to someone in "need." And, the benefit to the sponsor is much more than feeling good for having helped someone or having had the chance to learn about a "foreign" culture. The last keyword, *emissary*, allows me to examine opportunities in which the work of a literary sponsor can be seen as a more complex and egalitarian endeavor, promoting a dialogic relationship between sponsor and sponsored.

Emissary

I borrow the term *emissary* from Malkki, who observes how journalists and humanitarian aid organizations construct the refugee figure a "speechless emissary," often called upon to represent the totality of refugee experience but whose actual stories are often ignored, especially if they pose any challenge or complication to privileged, white audiences. According to the *OED*, despite *emissary* having a history of negative connotations such as being synonymous with "spy," contemporary usage defines the term as a "person sent on a mission to gain information, or to gain adherents to, or promote the interests of a cause." As a keyword, *emissary* has limitations because its meaning is primarily attached to individuals and is not used to describe other parties or institutions in the way *sponsor* is. However, the meanings "gain adherents to" and "promote the interests of a cause" are particularly helpful for recasting some of the issues surrounding refugees and literacy sponsorship. And, while I argue that *sponsor* tends to have an "outward" trajectory, *emissary* tends to move more "inward," toward the local as people, cultures, and languages find their way into U.S. writing classrooms and community literacy projects.

One major issue surrounding refugees and literacy sponsorship comes out of the long-standing debate about the extent to which students should be encouraged to write and speak in their "home" languages. Thinking of refugee students and writers as *emissaries* complicates this artificial division between home and school and has implications for composition studies more broadly. This debate has taken place in two separate realms of inquiry, each having different implications for the inclusion of refugee perspectives. These realms are the study of teaching English as a second language (TESL) and the study of minority discourses in U.S. classrooms, primarily African American English Vernacular (AAVE). Not only are TESL and AAVE usually addressed separately with only minor analogies made between the two, but this apparent separation is also symptomatic of what Paul Kei Matsuda argues is a "disciplinary division of labor" ("Situating" 104), a division in which the teaching of English in the form of U.S. college composition is performed by one group of workers and the teaching of English as a secondary language is done by another. Similarly, research on each is divided artificially, with composition studies seeming to have jurisdiction over the teaching of writing, literacy, rhetoric, and "critical thinking," and "ESL being the concern of applied linguistics" ("Composition" 704). This separation plays out in such a way that AAVE is seen to fall under the rubric of composition studies and is often regarded as only a dialect used by native English speakers, rather than as a second language.

Exploring these divisions, Matusda also observes that despite an increasingly multilingual student population, composition curricula and policies have held onto a conservative understanding of students as linguistically homogeneous. In "The Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity," Matsuda argues that the assumptions teachers and institutions

have of students "constitute a dominant image—a set of socially shared generalizations," and consequently, students who do not reflect that image remain "invisible" and can grow increasingly alienated by discourse both in the classroom and at an institutional level (639). Refugee students, like those labeled ESL, face similar consequences in terms of linguistic identity, or what Phillipson calls "linguicism," a form of discrimination based on linguistic difference in a space that assumes linguistic homogeneity (47). In this way, the linguistically diverse students to which Matsuda refers remain "speechless emissaries." The dominant image of the composition student rejects the linguistic resources and unique perspectives multilingual and refugee students bring to the U.S. college composition classroom.

The refugee students that I have met speak not two, but three, four, even five languages. For example, many of the Lost Boys speak Dinka, a language indigenous to South Sudan. They also used Arabic for trade and then learned English while in refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. The students I have tutored from the Congo know Swahili, South African varieties of English, as well as French and Afrikaans. Instead of viewing these linguistic differences as obstacles to their acquisition of standard American English, such students would benefit from what Horner et al. describe as a "translingual" approach to pedagogy, which recognizes "the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally" (305). Perhaps refugee students and writers could be emissaries of translingual and multilingual approaches to literacy. They speak to the transnational tendencies of language to commingle. For such ideals to become possibilities, though, compositionists, refugee studies scholars, teachers, tutors, and aid workers alike would have to view the vastly different contexts under which literacy-

learning takes place as an asset to cultural inclusivity rather than as a barrier to assimilation.

Regarding language variety such as the use of AAVE in the U.S. classroom, many scholars have observed how problems arise more out of racist assumptions and prejudices than out of actual linguistic difference or problems with communication. Racism frames the debate about whether or not students should use or even value their "home" discourses in educational and professional settings. Vershawn Ashanti Young argues that this problem is best analyzed through a critique of what has been termed "code-switching" pedagogy, or the explicit instruction of students to separate "home" discourse from "school" discourse. Young chooses to make the politics of these discourses transparent, labeling them "Black English Vernacular" (BEV) and "White English Vernacular" (WEV), highlighting the systemic racism behind such pedagogical impulses. Supported by composition scholars ranging from Peter Elbow (*Writing without Teachers*) and Mina Shaughnessy (*Errors and Expectations*), code-switching pedagogy teaches students how to "switch" between these two seemingly distinct language varieties based on occasion and context. Teachers help students identify these occasions.

Young sees code-switching pedagogies as overtly racist in their implementation and as misrepresentative of what the two varieties of English actually have in common. Young argues that these varieties are often "meshed" together in observed, everyday use, and thus a "code-meshing" pedagogy would be more ethical and productive for students who use varieties such as BEV. Code-switching, argues Young, devalues BEV as naturally "less than" and proponents remain uncritical of the effects this depreciation may have on students. The logic, as Young puts it, that "the two language varieties cannot mix

and must remain apart belies the claim of linguistic equality and replicates the same phony logic behind Jim Crow legislation" ("'Nah, We Straight'" 53). Young proposes code-meshing as a strategy that revalues language in order to dismantle a racist linguistic hierarchy, regardless of the supposed demands of the job market, which is itself a racist (and sexist, classist) structure of power.

Critics of Young's work who also support a multilingual or "translingual" approach to writing pedagogy pose at least two different arguments. First, the term "switching" has been a point of contention because from the perspective of scholars in linguistics, it is an appropriate term for describing a phenomenon observed in everyday language use. This critique, though, should not necessarily produce a debate, but is instead a result of the aforementioned disciplinary divisions, and Young does not dispute this definition of code-switching. From Young's perspective, code-switching has been misappropriated as a pedagogical strategy, taking on a much different meaning that has severe consequences for students of color. "Switching" in these contexts means that students are compelled to switch between dominant and non-dominant discourses in order to meet the expectations of standard language ideology. Critics also argue that the idea of "meshing" is not portable to contexts outside the U.S. While I agree, it appears that Young does not argue meshing should be portable. He proposes "code-meshing" to address the specific legacies of racism that have shaped the experiences of African-American students in the U.S. to which code-switching pedagogies have contributed significantly.

The work of Canagarajah provides a possible alternative to the disciplinary miscommunications involved in uses of code-switching pedagogies. In *Resisting*

Linguistic Imperialism, Canagarajah critiques Phillipson's description of "linguicism" for being too defeatist or absolue in its assessment of English as a neo-colonialist, hegemonic force. Phillipson, for example, argues that "linguistic imperialism" describes how "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (47). Canagarajah agrees that English has been a primary cause of global inequality because of its history as a colonizing language (41), but acknowledges its potential for users who "speak and write against the Empire" (34).

Like Young's theory of "code-meshing," Canagarajah argues for a view of language use and subsequent pedagogy that encourages acts of "critical negotiation" in which students and other users "appropriate the [English] language in their own terms, according to their needs, values, and aspirations" (176). Often, it seems, that a pedagogy is meant to dictate the terms by which a student uses language, but who is to say that as teachers of writing we really know the many "needs, values, and aspirations" our students bring to their learning occasions? "Critical negotiation" is a promising strategy for working with students who identify as refugees from Africa because it allows them, in my view, to value their experiences in refugee camps and value their multilingual histories rather than be forced to regard such experiences as obstacles to be overcome. To think of this work in relation to the term *emissary* means to acknowledge how people, like multilingual refugee students, for example, already engage in acts of negotiation in their everyday lives and how literacy sponsorship is a dialogic endeavor, not one in which the terms of appropriation are dictated from teacher to student.

Emissary can also mean "representative," and in many ways, this can be a

positive rendering of the term, especially when refugees have opportunities to tell their own stories in their own ways. In the memoirs written by the Lost Boys of Sudan, for instance, many explain how their familiarity with English combined with their desire to tell their stories helped put them in positions to share their stories on larger and more international stages, drawing attention to the injustices occurring in South Sudan. Of course, the risk of emphasizing the "representative" aspects of *emissary* is that refugees can be easily "tokenized" by well-intentioned, white audiences.

For example, the Lost Boys of Sudan have often been represented according to the "model minority" stereotype. I have heard them described as eager learners of English, hard workers, and enthusiastic students. People told me they were "wonderful" students to work with. They were, of course, but to hear teachers and tutors continuously use that kind of language or to read popular magazine articles that repeat similar sentiments demonstrates how the Lost Boys, as a group, are commodified as model immigrant student population, especially in relation to English literacy acquisition. In 2007, I attended a lecture at UWM by former Lost Boy and South Sudanese activist Jon Bul Dau. The flyer for his talked read, "Dau's passion and command of the English language assure that the message of the Sudanese will be heard around the world." This kind of statement exposes the value placed on the English language. It also props up the featured speaker as a "representative" of a particular kind of refugee, one who is easily assimilable. The flyer is an example of how dominant language ideology intersects with racism in the U.S.

As representatives, individual refugees are called upon to speak on behalf of refugee experience broadly conceived, as if refugee experience is the same for everyone.

While legal definitions and aid organizations find it necessary to treat refugees as such, Malkki explains that early approaches to refugee studies also studied "the refugee experience" as a "generalizable phenomenon" (508). Generalizing refugee experience proves problematic because it flattens the individual stories of refugees, which lasting implications for theorizing conceptions of "homeland" and the "uncritical use of the concepts of 'adaptation' and 'acculturation'" ("Refugees and Exile" 509). Home and school are complex domains for refugees. Asking refugees to act as representatives of what a refugee *should* be constitutes a unilateral approach to making sense of refugee experience. In order to intervene in such hegemonic tendencies, the practices associated with being a *sponsor* and an *emissary* should be placed in a dialectic relationship. In the same way that sponsors should value the many resources the sponsored bring to a given literacy-learning context, those in the position to sponsor should not unilaterally ask the sponsored to act as representatives of any kind of perceived homogeneous population. Instead, *sponsor* and *emissary* show the kinds of critical work possible at the intersection of composition and refugee studies.

Despite the contradictory uses to which the term *transnational* is put, I find it to be a useful lens for examining the discourses of power circulated within the processes of globalization. The five terms in this chapter—*global*, *mobility*, *citizenship*, *sponsor*, and *emissary*—are meant to provide a tentative vocabulary for exploring the *transnational* at the intersection of composition and refugee studies. Students might also use this vocabulary as a discourse for studying language and writing within composition classrooms. If students and teachers believe that college writing should prepare people to

enter an increasingly globalized society in which borders are more porous and

information flows with little resistance, then developing more complex meanings of these

terms should be a central purpose for a composition curriculum.

CHAPTER TWO: MAKING THE FAMILIAR UNFAMILIAR: RESEARCH PRINCIPLES AND

METHODS

This chapter serves as an articulation of the principles guiding my research and

how those principles translated into the research methods used in my field sites. In the

first section, I discuss how feminist rhetorics and postcolonial feminist theory shape my

understanding of academic research, especially in regard to self-reflective modes of

writing and the ethics of representing the Other. In the second section, I discuss the

research tools and interpretive methods I used when analyzing two different sets of data.

The first set addresses the published stories written by and about the Lost Boys of Sudan.

In this case, I am concerned with how refugee experience has been described by refugee

students and writers as well as the literacy sponsors who work with them. For my second

set, I collected interviews from aid workers, tutors, and students in a community literacy

program that serves African refugee and immigrant students. Here, I was most interested

learning how discourses of power might be used by literacy sponsors and how refugee

students subsequently appropriated those discourses.

To introduce my guiding principles, I would like to continue my story of working

with Dominic. While my experience with Dominic is not included as part of this research,

reflecting on our time in the writing center years ago helps me present the questions

about power and sponsorship I address in this project. I remember how Dominic would

sometimes show up to the writing center unannounced. While we welcomed walk-in

appointments, he preferred to work with me, and I remember sometimes feeling

frustrated at having to drop a project or task in order to meet with him. In our sessions, I

never quite knew when to help him revise his sentences and paragraphs or when to help

him expand his ideas or add more detail. This could be frustrating because textbook

writing center practice instructed that we avoid line-by-line editing, but it was clear that

Dominic sometimes wanted help with this. It could be a challenge to balance these

competing agendas. So, when I saw Dominic waiting at the reception desk, I knew we

were in store for an hour of difficult work.

Sometimes I think back on these moments and feel regret. I hope that my

frustration was not visible. Looking back, the most important part of my time at writing

center was working with Dominic. While I value that experience, I know that I should

also be careful to avoid uncritically celebrating or tokenizing Dominic and his story.

When I have shared my feelings with my feminist colleagues, they have drawn my

attention to how focusing on myself in such a way is a manifestation of white guilt. When

I thought of working with Dominic as sometimes difficult, I wonder what exactly was

challenging or frustrating about it. Perhaps I needed to do more work on myself, unlearn

liberal and racist discourses of power in order to be the kind of tutor Dominic needed me

to be rather than feel paralyzed by not knowing what responses were most appropriate.

White guilt is a liberal-centric impulse that washes over the more important issues at

hand, giving all the attention to the white face, as it were. In this case, those issues might

have been the limits to Dominic's rhetorical mobility as he tried to write about his

refugee experience in an academic setting or the naïve sense of inclusion that we might

have been promoting at the writing center. Similar concerns surround the field sites in

this dissertation. For instance, I have returned to the stories of the Lost Boys as well as

my role as a tutor. Instead of being consumed by feelings of guilt, regret, and other white

emotions that might feed into our desires for being a literacy sponsor to African refugee students and writers, I have tried to examine the contexts and causes of these feelings because I have observed their presence in acts of literacy sponsorship more broadly.

In this chapter, I reflect on the responsibility of literacy sponsors to consider the ethics of representing the Other, or how sponsors represent and address the people they work with. The research principles I draw from address the following questions: how can we write about people we work with in ethical ways when we are in positions of privilege and power? How can we deconstruct the discourses and ideologies that inform our depictions of them? What contexts and discourses inform our responses when we encounter refugee students and writers and their narratives of human suffering? When we write about these encounters, how do we avoid tokenizing, writing over, manipulating, uncritically celebrating, exploiting, or otherwise commodifying refugee experience? How can literacy sponsors like myself be active and ethical participants in the lives of resettled refugees without reverting to irrelevant, unproductive, and patronizing feelings of guilt, regret, pity, hope, or despair?

In "Ethnography and the Problem of the 'Other,'" Patricia Sullivan observes that the work of the traditional cultural anthropologist was to take what appeared to be strange and foreign about a culture and make it "familiar." This is the kind of approach feminist researchers have critiqued for being racist and imperialist. By casting cultures as unfamiliar, researchers reinscribed a distance between "us" and "them," continuing practices of dominance and Othering. Sullivan argues that we flip this paradigm. According to Sullivan, the work of the composition researcher, because we study language and everyday literacy practice, is "to make the familiar strange" (99). As

literacy and composition researchers, we often encounter assumptions and prejudices that are embedded in everyday discourse—discourses of power—and as sponsors, we participate in the reproduction of those discourses. In my research, I have tried to remember Sullivan's sentiment that the responsibility of the composition researcher is to make the familiar unfamiliar as I deconstruct the discourses of power in refugee communities in order that we might start to unlearn them.

Principles

A colleague asked me to present my work to her research writing class and to talk specifically about how I used methods of self-reflection when writing about the experiences of refugees. I explained to the class how I tried to account for and make sense of my positions of privilege, how a white, educated, native-born, English-speaking man might most ethically write about people who do not share the same rights or privileges. Afterward, my colleague told me that when I said the word "privilege," she heard a student remark quietly, "because you roll up to school in your BMW?" Unfortunately, I most often come to school on the city bus, so I laughed and dismissed the comment at the time, but I have thought a lot about that comment since and how privilege takes many forms and meanings. From the student's perspective, privilege might mean affluence and wealth. From my perspective as an ESL teacher, I see how being the only white, native English speaker in the classroom grants me a certain degree of authority. As a first-generation college student, I also know what it feels like to worry about being able to pay for college, even though my other privileges helped me acclimate myself to the expectations of middle-class discourse. When I am conducting fieldwork, I

find myself in similar positions, at the intersections of competing privileges and powers.

In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks observes how feminist "critics fail to interrogate the location from which they speak, often assuming, as it is now fashionable to do, that there is no need to question whether the perspective from which they write is informed by racist and sexist thinking" (77-78). I find the work of hooks helpful for addressing the above intersections because her synthesis of race, class, and gender exposes the interconnectedness of privilege and oppression. My research on literacy and refugee experience demands careful consideration of these interconnections, especially in how local instances of literacy-learning interact with global processes of governance, policy, and migration.

Since my project interrogates the paradigms of literacy sponsorship in the lives of refugees from Africa, I cannot ignore how I, too, am embedded within the same paradigms that I critique. As a literacy sponsor to refugee students and writers, I want to find ways to account for my own positions of privilege so that I might work with and write about refugee students in meaningful and ethical ways, but there is no denying that I benefit professionally from the labor of my participants. Researchers who study self-reflexive research writing often observe how the practice can risk becoming a distraction, taking attention away from the more pressing material conditions and contexts of the field site. In composition studies, Horner observes that acute attentiveness to self-reflexivity can result in

> calls for a seemingly endless series of ethical strictures on the direction, conduct, outcome, and writing of critical ethnographies that, in their overwhelming number and sometimes conflicting recommendations, can

> appear to place an impossible set of responsibilities on the shoulders of the
>
> critical ethnographer. (13)

Horner also argues that self-reflection can become commodified when it is regarded as more of a professional obligation than as a tool for social change. Horner's attention to materiality makes possible a more dialectic and reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant. Feminist geographers Koni Benson and Richa Nagar pose a similarly critical view of self-reflexivity when they argue that an overemphasis on the researcher's identity can detract from the material realities and structures of power that shape a field site (587). Understanding how a researcher's presence affects the field site is but one of the important factors that shape the contexts of research. As these scholars observe, reflexivity should be used to understand a complex network of material realities in a given field site that includes but is not obsessed with the researcher's own presence. In my effort to enact a similar approach, I focus on the subject of *context*. If we are to understand the complex situations from and into which refugees are resettled, we need to consider several scales of analysis. In Chapter One, I examine the contexts of globalization and the complicated, sometimes contradictory, meanings this term represents. This could be considered a "global" and theoretical scale of analysis. Then, as my field sites demonstrate in the following chapters, I study the "local" contexts of education in the U.S. and community literacy programs that serve refugee students. My discussion of context is simultaneously a discussion of discourse, i.e. how these structures of sponsorship are described and depicted by those who participate in them.

Understanding the global and the local in relation to one another enables observations of how geographic and economic contexts influence discourses of power. In

the case of my research participants, "Africa" is sometimes used as a metonym for "Third World" in a way that recalls discourses of colonialism and neoliberal economic philosophies. "Refugee," in turn, can be used as an idealized image of the victim, the individual or the mass of humanity perceived to be in need of uplift, a passive object of aid. Postcolonial feminist Uma Narayan explains how problems that occur within places that are labeled "Third World" are often dismissed by those in the so-called First World as culturally-specific, as bound to homogeneous understandings of region, nation, and continent. Narayan calls this a "cultural explanation" that impedes "the project of 'understanding Other cultures'" (104-05). Narayan argues that such dominant and privileged perspectives ignore, write over, or misrepresent crucial "historical and political knowledge" (103).

Narayan explores the problem of cross-cultural understanding by analyzing how depictions, narratives, images, and discourses about gender are continuously reproduced, circulated, and consumed transnationally. Narayan observes that it is the notion of "difference" that enables Third World imagery to cross borders for consumption in and interpretation by the West, stating "The issues that 'cross borders' then become 'Third-World gender issues' that are taught about and studied 'across the border,' reinforcing their 'iconic' and 'representative' status as issues" (100). In the contexts of refugee experience, Narayan's argument reverberates with Malkki's observation of the "standardized" images, tropes, and discourses about refugees which are "easily translated and shared" across various manifestations of borders and should be considered "transnationally mobile" (386). In this project, I show how the discourses of power that depict the Third World are intimately linked with representations of refugee identity,

each used as an example of the other.

In my interpretations of interview transcripts, I try to follow Narayan's critique of cultural explanations. When tutors, for example, use depictions of Africa, I try to think of the ways in which the tutors are embedded within discourses of power. I want to emphasize the role context and discourse plays in acts of literacy sponsorship rather than draw too much attention to particular sponsors, "blaming" them for reproducing racist, imperialist discourse. I also do not want to "set up" my participants for easy critique, which I believe would be an unethical use of their consent. Based on my understanding of the scholarship in literacy research and refugee studies, I knew beforehand sponsors would reproduce dominant understandings of Africa, economic development, refugees, and education. In my interpretations, I am more interested in the possible contradictions in their statements because contradictions sometimes indicate a tentative awareness of these discourses of power, even if not wholly acknowledged or understood.

When I write more specifically about individuals, like the Lost Boys of Sudan or the refugee students I interviewed, I critique cultural explanations in favor of examining rhetorical strategies. Krista Ratlcliffe provides a critical, rhetorical interpretive practice for making sense of these problematic discourses about the Other, which she terms "rhetorical listening." Ratcliffe describes "rhetorical listening" as a "stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture" for the purpose of "cross-cultural exchanges" (1). In particular, Ratcliffe's notion of "understanding," what she describes as a process of "standing under" the "discourses that surround us," helped me identify and analyze everyday discourse in my research sites. By carefully standing under and listening to discourses of power as they are circulated,

produced, and consumed—as well as my own participation in their circulation—I tried to read against the grain of these discourses in an effort to see how refugee students and writers speak back to dominant discourse or perhaps see themselves as their own sponsors of literacy.

Important to my understanding of the ethics of representation is Trinh T. Minh-ha's discussion of Othering. In "Not You/Like You," Trinh illustrates the power of Othering through a critique of the insider/outsider relationship. Her critique of this paradigm is essential for understanding qualitative and ethnographic research writing and how subjects marked as Other might identify or be identified (by themselves or by a researcher, for instance). Traditional ethnographic writing has been critiqued for fetishizing the "insider's view," the insider being a term Trinh describes as "The magic word that bears within itself a seal of approval" (217). Yet, this approval is not value-free; it is driven by discourses of power that measure "authenticity." Trinh calls this assessment a "gift" given from the dominant class to the Other. The strings tied to this gift dictate that those who are Othered can write about no experience but their own, while the dominant class (white, Western, academic elite) can and should write about every experience in the name of objective, scientific observation. I confront the dangers of this "gift" in my research when I hear refugee students make assertions such as, "In Africa, we did this..." I must resist the urge to take that statement and circulate it as truth, as representative of every African refugee or every refugee from a particular country. In other words, this is a problem about generalizing conclusions from my interview data. As my fieldwork shows, different groups of refugees, and even individuals, have different relationships with the idea of "Africa." One "insider's" view will contradict the view of

another. But, as I show, this is only a problem if it is made to be a problem by the researcher or the researcher's audience.

Trinh's goal is to break with the custom of giving this gift, but the break can be paradoxical. In my work, I write about those who are Othered, marked as outsider by the legal status of refugee and marked as foreign and backward because of their African origin, the language they speak, and their cultural traditions (such as traditional clothing). To say that I should not write about African refugees implies that only refugees from Africa can write about that experience, an implication that succumbs to the trap of authenticity. To say that I *can* write about African refugees implies that I can do so objectively and does not necessarily subvert the traditional participant-observer paradigm and risks taking away an opportunity for people to represent themselves. I think that the best I can do is have a diligent adherence to context, history, and "standing under" the discourses of power that manifest in acts of literacy sponsorship. Because I am telling stories of sponsorship, as a teacher, I am an insider of sorts. But, my focus on deconstructing the power dynamics of literacy sponsorship means that I do not prescribe a specific pedagogy or a set of "best practices" for working with refugee students and writers. Instead, I locate places in which racist, colonialist, paternalistic, and neoliberal discourses seem to shape our understanding of literacy sponsorship in refugee communities. My suggestions for composition pedagogy are directed toward cross-cultural communication and understanding, toward tutor-training and teacher professional development (addressed in Chapter Five).

As I interpret and analyze first the texts written by and about refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan and then interviews collected in the after-school program, I maintain

a context-driven stance by politicizing the reading and writing practices of refugee students and writers as speaking back to discourses of power. In regards to the ethics of representation, Trinh also argues that when self-reflection is used solely for accumulation of knowledge, there is no "going beyond" and "no elsewhere-within-here seems possible if reflection on oneself is not at one and the same time the analysis of established forms of the social that define one's limits" ("Totalizing" 235). In published stories about the Lost Boys of Sudan, for instance, I have to read against the grain of a literacy sponsor's statements as a way of analyzing the "established forms" Trinh discusses. Literacy sponsorship can often act as a means for maintaining the status quo, for elevating the English language and U.S. brands of education which devalue the literacy practices of refugees and the places from which they are settled. These instances expose disproportionate relations of power between those who are able to name the experience of another and those who wish to name their own. Throughout my research, I try to make these relations, which seem familiar, appear unfamiliar, or as Sullivan says, "render them strange" in order to show how everyday literacy practice and seemingly benign forms of literacy sponsorship are shaped by globally pervasive discourses of power.

Methods

In this section, I discuss how my research principles translate into research practices in my two sites: published stories by and about the Lost Boys of Sudan and the interviews I conducted in an after-school program for African refugee students. I would like to introduce this section by highlighting the important implications of fieldwork in the realm of refugee studies. While the stories of the Lost Boys are rich with examples of

sponsorship, it was important to me to work in the community as well. In the "Forward"

to *The State, The Crisis of State Institutions, and Refugee Migration in the Horn of*

Africa, Wondem Asres gives an example of the importance of fieldwork. As both a

researcher and an asylum-seeker, Asres describes the limits to his mobility that affected

his research methods:

> I would like to make it clear that the research [in this book] is mainly
>
> library research. It is based on secondary resources. I was not able to do
>
> any field research. This was not because of the usual financial problem or
>
> lack of interest. It is because I was not allowed to travel outside the
>
> Netherlands. I was not allowed even to travel within 'borderless' Europe
>
> because I am not a citizen of Europe. I am an outsider and non-citizen.
>
> The national boundaries that are nonexistent for citizens of Europe are still
>
> effective for outsiders. This is the problem I have been sharing with
>
> hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of asylum-seekers in Europe. (xiii-
>
> xiv)

Asres shares a sobering truth, exposing for me the many unearned privileges I enjoy in

relation to both my research participants and the authors and subjects of the texts I

interpret. As I continue to reflect on how to write about refugee experience as an outsider,

I try to remember how unearned privilege can remain unchecked in the academy. As

Asres implies, some researchers are more mobile than others. In this project, the inclusion

of fieldwork provides a method for carefully weighing my text-based, narrative analyses

against the experiences and voices of refugee students in a local context. As a researcher,

I hope to interact as ethically as possible with my research sources, whether they are

human participants or narrative voices.

The Stories of the Lost Boys of Sudan

When thinking about how I might best identify the contexts that shape literacy sponsorship, I have found close attention to dominant discourses, depictions, representations, and idealized images to be the most manageable and the most illustrative. I use this approach in both of my field sites. That is, I consider the published stories written by and about the Lost Boys of Sudan to be one site which provides a rhetorical means for tracing discourses of power across multiple locations. In these stories, I observe the local experiences of individual refugees as well as the bureaucratic processes that constrain their physical and rhetorical mobility. I also identify the assumptions and prejudices that inform dominant discourses about refugees, such as the popular distrust of asylum seekers, and racial, ethnic, and linguistic biases.

Ratcliffe's concept of rhetorical listening helps me identify the discourses of power reproduced in the stories by and about the Lost Boys of Sudan. After I identify these tropes and images, I reread these stories looking for alternate meanings, or places in which refugees disrupt or speak back to dominant discourse. In these texts, sponsors take the form of journalists and volunteer mentors, some of whom took it upon themselves to write about their experience sponsoring the Lost Boys. At other times, the Lost Boys write about their own interactions with sponsors. These sponsors not only promote English literacy and language acquisition, but also provide mentoring and cultural introduction. I have found the descriptions sponsors make about the refugees they work with can be reread and reinterpreted to show how refugee students are more active agents

in their own literacy-learning.

My interpretations are influenced by the close-reading techniques described by Jane Gallop in "The Ethics of Reading: Close Encounters." For example, Gallop's discussion of "projection" is important for identifying discourses of power in texts: "Stereotypes about 'the other'—the other sex, the racialized other—are in fact technically projections. They derive from our notions of the self, and belong to a simplistic opposition of self versus other" (14). While acknowledging my own expectations of refugee stories as diligently as possible, I identify how literacy sponsors depict the Lost Boys of Sudan as "deficient" or "ideal." Sponsors also project their feelings of guilt, pity, hope, and despair upon learning of the Lost Boys' refugee story. When sponsors appropriate stories of refugee experience in service of a liberal agenda, they miss the valuable rhetorical and literate strategies refugee students and writers might employ. Sometimes, I merely reread statements recorded by literacy sponsors, statements in which the Lost Boys describe an experience or practice that was ignored by the sponsor.

Fieldwork

For the past three years, I have worked as a volunteer tutor and teacher for the Pan-African Community Association (PACA), a refugee resettlement agency in Milwaukee. While there are several such agencies in the city, PACA is the only organization that works specifically with refugees from the African continent. Refugees aided by PACA have been resettled from places like the Congo, South Africa, Sudan, and Uganda, but the most populous groups come from Somalia and Eritrea. I spent most of my time tutoring in PACA's After School Program for African Immigrants and Refugees

(ASPAIR) and working with high school students who self-identified as Somali-Bantu.

My fieldwork relies solely on interviews I conducted with aid workers, tutors, and students. Because I have spent the majority of my time in PACA acting as a tutor and teacher, I have also included several anecdotes based on my own observations, collected in a notebook and computer journal, though I must stress that I did not *systematically* collect anecdotes. Instead, I made note of some of the incidents that caught my attention. Thus, in my fieldwork analysis, interviews were my primary source of data. When I first started volunteering, I was struck by the different kinds of spaces that housed the after-school program. In 2010, we met in a classroom at one of the elementary schools downtown. I made note of how the classroom seemed to be used for storage: "There are a lot of ESL materials boxed up in 'all-inclusive' packages," I wrote, "as well as books for middle-school students" (4/12/10). I remember these books specifically because they seemed to fit oddly within the context of the refugee students who would use the room:

> In one corner is a sitting area with a magazine rack that has various magazines and books. The magazines seem similar to what you'd find in a doctor's office (*Golf Digest*, for one), but the books are more interesting. They seem to be for ESL readers because there are versions that highlight important vocabulary and idiomatic language. One is an Ayn Rand book made more "readable" in this way. There is also a book about 9/11. I'm not sure if these are donations or used to introduce refugees to American culture. (4/12/10)

The Ayn Rand book was particularly concerning as a possible resource for refugee cultural orientation, but I never saw any of the students reading it (to my relief!).

During the interview process, aid workers and students were given pseudonyms because they told more personal stories. Each person had a completely different perspective on the questions I asked, so I felt it necessary to differentiate among them. For instance, one aid worker, "Adam," told me about how he taught English in a Kenyan refugee camp. I did not assign names to the tutors because I wanted to avoid setting them up for easy critique if they made stereotypical generalizations about the students. I assumed that they were the group with the least amount of training. Therefore, I kept their statements as anonymous as possible. This was the group who most risked reproducing discourses of power, so I decided to treat them more generically.

Aid workers were those participants who worked for PACA in an official capacity. Some of them told me they had been refugees as well at some point in their lives. Some were placed there during a public-service internship and then hired full-time. I interviewed three aid workers. Each had a broad understanding of the vision of the organization and how the day-to-day work of PACA functioned according to that vision. Aid workers also provided me with important background information on the refugee students. The aid workers were practiced in describing the lives of refugees when they are resettled in the U.S. When possible, I used their expertise to perform a kind of collaborative interpretation of my findings. For example, after the first interview with one of the aid workers, I showed him a conference paper in which I wrote about some of the statements he made. He read it and gave me feedback, which framed our second interview because he wanted to revise some of what he said the first time.

The second category of interviews included tutors, probably the most immediately recognizable literacy sponsors in the field site. Tutors came to PACA as community

volunteers, service-learning students from the local universities, or work-study students who were paid a wage by their university but had the freedom to choose to do their hours in different participating programs in the city. Collaboratively interpreting my findings with tutors proved much more difficult because they were typically only in the after-school program for one semester.

Initial interviews with tutors caused me to revise my interview questions (see Appendix) and helped me see how my fieldwork connected to my analysis of the stories of the Lost Boys of Sudan. At first, I asked tutors to talk about the practices and the strategies they used when working with students. But, this resulted in responses that lacked the kind of detail I needed. Perhaps this was because they were not necessarily trained to be tutors and did not have a vocabulary for talking about the work of tutoring. Service-learning students were placed in a variety of positions, and tutoring may or may not have been an expectation of that placement. The same applied work-study students. When thinking about this problem, I also realized it was difficult to describe my own tutoring practices because I was not used to working with elementary or high school students, who often brought exercises to complete in grammar or math rather than essays. It turned out that tutoring practices were not as important to the purpose of my project as were the ways in which tutors—literacy sponsors—described their experiences, the students they worked with, and the places the students were from. In response to this situation, I added the following interview questions:

What was your previous understanding of Africa before you started working here?

What was your previous understanding of refugees?

How do you see yourself relating or not relating to the students you work with?

When/if you describe this work to other people (friends, classmates, family, etc.), what are some of the things you say?

These questions came out of the interpretations I was already making of the stories written by and about the Lost Boys as well as the responses tutors were already giving to other questions. Questions that drew more attention to tutors' understandings of Africa and refugee identity related more directly to what I saw as being an important problematic in the work of literacy sponsors broadly. Also, tutors responded more readily to questions that were culturally-oriented rather than specifically related to tutoring itself. Interviews felt more like conversations after I added these questions. I wanted to be careful, though, not to "set up" tutors for easy critique. That is, I anticipated that they might rely on discourses of power and racist or classist assumptions of Africa when answering these more context-related questions, and while these are the kinds of discourses I wanted to deconstruct, I did not want to unfairly lead my participants to reproduce them.

What came out of their responses, though, was a combination of nuanced understanding and dominant discourse, demonstrating to me how the different understandings tutors had often struggled or competed against one another, and I think that the revision of my interview questions toward these issues was productive. Tutors were careful to express their ideas with a self-conscious tentativeness. They often told me that they did not want to make generalizations, but sometimes proceeded to make some sort of broad claim about Africa or refugee experience. The ways that tutors talked typically went back-and-forth in this way. I cannot come to any conclusions as to why.

Perhaps it was from working directly with refugee students and they began to unlearn some of the discourses of power shaping their understanding. But, I found these incongruities to be fruitful places to do critical, interpretive work.

The third category of interviews included the refugee students who made use of the after-school program. This was the hardest group to collect interviews from because many of them were minors and their parents and guardians spoke limited English. Also, because my discipline focuses on college writing, my preference was to interview college students, but during my time in the organization, I did not meet any students who were in college. Most of them were in elementary school and high school. I chose to focus on the high school students as several of them were juniors and seniors who were beginning to think about college. The high school students also came to the U.S. at a late enough age for them to remember their resettlement, including what it was like to learn English in different contexts. While I talk about this in depth in Chapter Four, one of the most important findings that came out of working with these students was learning how savvy they were in their understanding of the kinds of discourses and assumptions that circulate about them. When I asked one student if I could interview him and explained to him the kind of audience I was writing to, he said, "Tell them you have a real, live African guy."

I chose to focus on three students, two of whom self-identified as Somali-Bantu and one who told me she was from the Congo, but then lived in South Africa. My interview questions were designed to encourage the students to talk about their experiences learning English, but I also asked about other languages they spoke. At first, I was not sure how their multilingual knowledge would fit into my framework, but it soon became apparent that the strategic choices students made about when to use English and

the comments they made about learning English showed me how they can speak back to discourses of power such as standard language ideology (Lippi-Green) and monolingual/monocultural bias (Canagarajah).

The limits of this project, as I see it, have to do with scope. PACA is a small organization even though it is the only organization in Milwaukee whose mission is to serve refugees from African nations. Collecting interviews from some of the other refugee resettlement agencies in the city would have helped me further triangulate my data. For example, the larger organizations in the city have more formalized tutor-training. I think it would be important to know if tutor-training at these other locations addresses cultural sensitivity or focuses primarily on tutoring methods.

My own role as a researcher was limited as well. Originally, I had intended to observe the interactions between tutors and students. However, because the after-school program serves so many students, I spent almost all of my time tutoring and only had time for interviews. I found it difficult to break away from tutoring to observe my participants because there were always students who wanted help. While this was not ideal in terms of the project I envisioned, working directly with the students was a major reason why I was there in the first place. Observing tutoring sessions would be a method to emphasize more in a future project. I could have tutors observe themselves as well. They could take notes in a journal or fill out post-tutoring surveys.

Theorizing research methods helped me understand the limits of my own self-reflection. As a teacher and a researcher—and someone who teaches research writing—I find that the most important aspect of self-reflection is that it has helped me make own agenda more transparent. Researchers often risk writing over, manipulating, and ignoring

the stories and voices of others in service of our own pursuits, and this applies to both my fieldwork and my interpretation of published texts. Though sponsors might have the best of intentions, uncritical and unreflective practices can lead a researcher to force another person's story into an idealized image or discourse that reproduces dominant logics of patriarchy, colonialism, racism, as well as educational and linguistic bias. Self-reflective writing does not necessarily alleviate or minimize these risks, but it helps makes them more visible. If they are visible, then they can be deconstructed or at least addressed more directly.

CHAPTER THREE: "SPONSORS OF LITERACY: THE LOST BOYS OF SUDAN"

Thinking about my time working with Dominic in the writing center often reminds me of the notion of "best practice." According to textbook writing center instruction, the tutor should work with the writer to "set the agenda" of the tutoring session. Agenda-setting often requires negotiation between both parties because students sometimes want more traditional "teacherly" or editorial feedback such as proofreading, specific directions for revision, or help with other "lower-order concerns," while tutors are trained to talk more about purpose and organization and act as facilitators of the revision process. Other tutoring practices include encouraging students to use the proverbial "show don't tell" strategy and to add more detail. However, the concept of "best practice" cannot hide the fact that "best" is subjective. Individual tutoring and teaching moments often work against what has been deemed most effective. In fact, what is "best," like the descriptions of the ideal writing center discussed in Chapter One, are burdened by Euro-centric, white, English-only, privileged discourses of power.

Tutoring Dominic, I sometimes experienced moments of disjuncture as textbook 'best practice' came into contact with the immediate contexts of the work we were doing. Of course, this is always the case when tutoring or teaching, when the interactions between theory and practice are observed firsthand, but working with Dominic brought up for me an unexpected anxiety between the two. I remember having trouble responding to this passage in his essay:

> For the first time the UNHCR agents came to see the "Lost Boys" and get some information, they were so shocked. They saw everybody laying

under the trees. Some of the Lost Boys were so unconscious and others were under way to heaven. The UN personel were only news collectors, they came and took some photos and some videotapes and went back to Geneva to show them to the donators who could provide some donation to the war victim children. After they left, life became much worse.

Knowing that Dominic, sitting next to me, had this memory, that "Some of the Lost Boys were so unconscious and others were under way to heaven.," produced a moment to which I had no response as a writing tutor. What could possibly give me the right to point out that "under" seemed an awkward construction or was a phonetic misrepresentation of "on their," that some of the syntax seemed confusing, that parts of the paper needed more detail and more personal insight? Was crying an appropriate response? I honestly do not remember what I said or did the first time we went over that passage, but in hindsight, sitting in silence was perhaps the only thing to do. Even if writing center practice promotes dialogue and discussion, why should I feel compelled to fill that silence with my white, American presence? Dominic had his own reasons for wanting to share his story with others, and any discomfort I felt was, in reality, my own problem to try and work through.

As shown previously, Brandt defines "literacy sponsors" as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy – and gain advantage by it in some way" (166). While continuing to explore sponsorship that appears both "local" and "distant," I extend my discussions of the power relations of literacy sponsorship to include an analysis of how sponsors "gain" some sort of "advantage" from sponsorship in refugee communities. In the case of refugees from the African continent like the Lost Boys of Sudan, the paradigm of literacy sponsorship needs to be deconstructed according to the discourses of

power involved. Literacy sponsorship is almost always seen as positive, and sponsors regard themselves as having the best of intentions. The refugee subject, in contradistinction, is almost always seen as negative. Refugees are reduced to objects of aid, sympathy, or pity. They are represented as always in need of rescue by an outside power or host. In the literacy sponsorship of refugees we seem to have the perfect marriage between those institutions and individuals who have the power to uplift and those groups and individuals who seem to need uplifting. The refugee subject is, in this sense, the ideal object of literacy sponsorship.

The problem with the "best practice" model as well as with literacy sponsorship more generally is how the structures through which sponsorship are enacted allow this seemingly "perfect" marriage to remain unquestioned. In contrast to the dominant rhetorics of "uplift," I demonstrate how refugee identity can be seen as positive and political, as historical and resistant. Examining the more affirming aspects of refugee experience shows how refugees claim varying degrees of agency and thus directly disrupt the unquestioned "goodness" of literacy sponsorship. Sponsorship can then be deconstructed to reveal the many ways in which sponsors might "gain advantage by it some way." I pair the concept of literacy sponsorship with Malkki's argument that dominant representations of refugee experience render the refugee figure as a kind of "speechless emissary," or voiceless agent. According to Malkki, refugees are often called upon to be "emissaries" for what it means to be a "refugee," having critically insightful stories to tell of their experience. These stories, though, are frequently silenced, manipulated, and overwritten by audiences and institutions (i.e. "sponsors") for the "advantage" of (re)producing an image of refugee subjectivity that is more easily

recognized by those in power, that fit the needs of a state agenda.

Emissary can be a difficult term, but I use it to illustrate the literacy strategies put into practice by refugee students and writers, strategies that are rhetorically savvy and, when paid close attention to, help sponsors unlearn their unacknowledged prejudice. In Chapter One, I explain how *emissary* can describe different types of "agents," and in the case of the Lost Boys of Sudan, this means that individuals are sometimes asked to represent the whole group, or to represent *the* refugee experience. However, e*missary* can also be used in contrast to *sponsor* in an effort to recognize how those who are sponsored have more agency than is evident in the established constructs of literacy sponsorship. In this chapter, I identify the discourses of power sponsors (both individuals and organizations) use to describe refugee students and writers like the Lost Boys of Sudan. Then, by examining the stories the Lost Boys tell about their own experience, I argue that we should think of them not as objects of aid but as "emissaries of literacy." Despite the best of intentions, sponsors should be held more accountable for the racist and imperialist assumptions they make of refugee students and writers. We can have a fuller sense of literacy sponsorship by recasting refugees as political agents, as sponsors of their own literacy-learning.

The term *emissary* has certain limitations that I want to acknowledge. First, *emissary* places a great deal of emphasis on the individual and burdens that individual with speaking for a group, which risks a racialized tokenization of the refugee subject. In the texts I examine, these particular refugee writers are comfortable with taking on this task because they were selected to be spokespeople during their time in refugee camps, which constitutes a more positive emissary role of respect among one's own people. This

can sometimes be problematic, though, because refugees, at least in the stories I examine in this chapter, are not chosen *by* their peers to be representatives. Instead, they are identified by aid workers, from the "top down" as proficient speakers of English, as the right kind of refugee for their imagined audience. Sponsors must be careful not to thrust the mantle of *emissary* upon a given individual. With the construct "emissaries of literacy," I emphasize how sponsors can recognize the expertise of refugee students and writers as it pertains to their own literacy practices. They cannot be considered, however, "emissaries of refugee experience" or "emissaries of Africa." That is, sponsors must resist casting refugees from Africa as a "native informant," and should instead look to see how refugees can be and have already been their own literacy sponsors.

The literacy experiences of refugee students and writers are often congruent with the experiences of students classified as "ESL" or "international." As Ilona Leki demonstrates, ESL and international students bring to their learning occasions reading and writing strategies that are informed by their past cultural and linguistic experiences, strategies that both resist and accommodate teacher and audience expectations. Refugee students also draw from their multilingual experience. One difference I recognize between ESL students and refugee students is a set of constraints based on the processes and perceptions of asylum-seeking. According to the sponsors I quote in this chapter, refugees are regarded with a mix of hope and suspicion: hope in terms of the belief that refugees have escaped war and have been given a chance to start a new life in America, and suspicion in terms of the perception of asylum as a burden on the system.

Additionally, though I identify patterns in the stories written by and about the Lost Boys of Sudan, I do not use these patterns to generalize about the genre conventions

of refugee narratives. Other scholars I cite in this chapter have already done this work (Malkki, Powell, Bohmer and Schuman). Instead, I use these patterns, these established genre conventions and audience expectations to analyze the discourses of power about literacy sponsorship described in these texts. Like refugee narratives, popular articles and books *about* African refugees seem to share certain conventions in genre. I analyze both the perspectives of the Lost Boys as well as those sponsors who work them. In my view, the perspectives of sponsors are often informed by the expected genre conventions of the refugee narrative, especially as that narrative pertains to a particularly perceived African refugee identity. It follows that sponsors risk reproducing discourses that unfairly and problematically position African refugees as subordinate, which in turn detrimentally affects the relations surrounding literacy sponsorship in racist, neo-colonial, and linguistically hegemonic ways.

At every turn, close attention to the stories refugees tell shows how refugee students and writers strategically challenge the discourses of power in their lives. Paying close attention to the stories refugees tell and the ways in which they choose to tell them reveals how refugee students and writers both critically resist and strategically accommodate dominant expectations of what it means to be a "refugee." Refugee students and writers demonstrate a critical awareness of how their stories are commodified, and through this awareness, they rework and redefine their relationship with English literacy. Refugee experience can provide a lens for analyzing the many processes and conditions under which English literacy takes place, how people and their literacy practices have been forced to cross borders, both material and abstract, and how people have sought education in the context of seeking asylum.

In this chapter, I will first give historical context to the Lost Boys' refugee story, followed by a detailed rhetorical analysis of the categories *refugee* and *Africa*. This will provide a framework for the constraints and expectations placed upon literacy sponsorship in relation to refugee experience. I will then apply the concepts of *sponsor* and *emissary* to texts composed by and about the Lost Boys of Sudan. Through my analysis, I argue not only that literacy sponsorship in these contexts reproduces white, liberal, colonizing discourses of power, but also that other, more meaningful relationships are possible, relationships that responsibly recognize that refugee students and writers can be their own sponsors of literacy.

Telling the Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan

Sudan is a country of deep history that includes (but is not limited to) narratives of colonization, decolonization, and civil conflict. For instance, in 1947, reflecting many other decolonization narratives, the colonial British administration, which had previously treated the Muslim and Arab-populated northern regions and the more tribal southern regions as separate, decided to unite the two before ending their occupation (Bixler 49). The new, imposed "unity" gave rise to rebel armies such as the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the south, who fought against the government-sponsored fighters known to many as the "murahaleen" from the north. Both groups raided southern villages, the murahaleen for tactical reasons and slave labor and the SPLA for resources and to recruit child soldiers. In the mid-1980s, raids and fighting increased exponentially, forcing tens-of-thousands of children, mostly boys, to be displaced.

Popular news accounts named this group the "Lost Boys of Sudan," and explained that the majority of those who fled their villages were of the Nuer and Dinka tribes, between the ages of 8 and 18, and were either sent away by their families so as to not be taken as child soldiers or were tending cattle away from home while their villages were attacked (Bixler 56-74). Over 17,000 of these unaccompanied minors journeyed months across Sudan, eventually reaching a refugee camp in Ethiopia. Shortly thereafter, Ethiopia's own instability caused the Lost Boys to once again flee to another country's borders. In 1992, only half of their original numbers arrived at Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp, their home for the next decade. Here, they would receive education in math and English. In the year 2000, the U.S. State Department deemed their situation an official humanitarian crisis and resettled 3600 of the now young adult Sudanese so that they could pursue an American education. According to newspaper reports, the Lost Boys were "the largest resettled group of unaccompanied refugee children in history" (Corbett 50).

By now, I have retold the narrative of the "Lost Boys of Sudan," a narrative that is not my own, in one form or another, many times: in seminar papers and conference presentations, in classroom activities and collegial conversations. My primary goal in these instances has been to acknowledge the global contexts of the Lost Boys' story in order to examine local discourses that surround refugees as they interact with different kinds of sponsors during resettlement. Such discourses are continuously (re)produced, circulated, and consumed through various literacy practices and the contexts of literacy sponsorship. The pairing of the global and the local shows how each informs the other and how such discourses are able to operate transnationally. In "Speechless Emissaries:

Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization," Malkki explains how these discourses cross borders:

> standardizing discursive and representational forms (or, perhaps more precisely, tendencies) have made their way into journalism and all of the media that report on refugees. As a result, it is possible to discern transnational commonalities in both the textual and visual representations of refugees. Such transnationally mobile representations are often very easily translated and shared across nation-state borders. (386)

By retelling the story of the "Lost Boys," I (as a sponsor of literacy) also contribute to the circulation of these discourses. Particularly pertinent to literacy sponsorship within transnational contexts, Malkki draws attention to the processes of "sharing" and "translation." Malkki argues that not only does sharing and translation occur "easily," but these actions also have "standardizing" tendencies. This process illustrates how descriptions of the Lost Boys' "stilted, archaic English passed on from missionaries" (Barry) and their confrontation with a "swirling river of white faces" (Corbett 48) when first resettling in the U.S. can be used as examples of "standardizing" discourses about refugees from Africa. The sponsors who make these descriptions rely on, both knowingly and unknowingly, the discourses of power that govern both refugee identity and this place called "Africa," which is a place shaped by the imagery of a "dark" and "backward" continent. The next section unpacks the specific discourses that inform literacy sponsors' understanding of the terms *refugee* and *Africa* in order to provide context for the ways the educational experiences of the Lost Boys of Sudan are described.

The Logics Governing the Terms *Refugee* and *Africa*

At its most basic, the word *refugee* denotes a legal status that marks one eligible to receive humanitarian aid. Yet, much of the academic research on refugees agrees that the word is particularly difficult to pin down or apply evenly across different experiences and contexts. The politics and legalities of this labeling practice is fraught with inconsistency. The United Nations provides an official definition: an individual who seeks asylum in another nation-state due to a "well-founded fear of being persecuted" (UNHCR 16), but implementations of this definition vary from one governing body to another. According to Nyers, these implementations operate according to processes "deeply rooted in political and ideological calculations," making legal refugee status a form of aid that is unevenly distributed (13).

The category of refugee operates according to two competing logics. The first is best described as a logic of the state apparatus, which according to Nyers, "can be understood as a power of capture," wherein "subjects of the classification regime of 'refugeeness' are caged within a depoliticized humanitarian space" (xiii). The state logic, in other words, regards refugees as one homogeneous mass of people, and the "depoliticized space" in which they are "caged" constrains both their physical and rhetorical mobility. According to state logic, refugees are measured against that which they are not: "adult," "historical actor," "sovereign citizen" (xiv). Individual refugee identity is only acknowledged during the process of determining who is eligible to receive asylum, a process heavily burdened by ideology. Postcolonial feminist Inderpal Grewal, for instance, examines how gender politics can be manipulated by the state in order to determine who is most deserving of aid, even within the same ethnic or national

population (159).

State logics, though, do not solely imply nation-state authority or processes bound to nation-state borders and state-sponsored institutions, but include the many governing bodies that have a hand in distributing aid and organizing resettlement such as the United Nations, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charitable and non-profit organizations, and networks of volunteer aid workers, religious groups, the Red Cross, etc.—a panoply of agencies who govern and bureaucratize refugee subjects as they cross various manifestations of borders. In a sense, state logic is analogous to Foucault's theory of "governmentality," especially in how the discourses of power that "cage" refugee subjects are not exclusively used by the state in its official capacity, but also infect popular attitudes toward refugee identity. In this way, state logic reflects the "ensemble" of attitudes and political processes that produce knowledge about groups and individuals (Foucault 108), in this case, refugees. Of course, the prevailing attitude is that refugees are objects of pity, and because they are dependent upon aid, they are often seen as a burden on the system, and it is only the "developed" nations of the "First World" that are equipped to "uplift" them. In this way, the state logic is a logic of ascription wherein multiple governing bodies exercise the power to name the experience of another—of the Other.

Malkki argues, however, that refugees often "appropriate the category as a vital, positive dimension of their collective identity in exile" (377), particularly by telling the stories of their experience. Since both Nyers and Malkki refer to the governmentality of refugees as "depoliticizing," I will tentatively call this second logic a "political" logic because the stories refugees tell and the ways in which they choose to tell them can be a

kind of resistance or alternative to the depoliticizing tendencies of the state. The "political logic" draws attention to the historical, political, and communal aspects of refugee experience and its implications for different forms of agency. The act of considering refugee identity as positive or enriching rebukes state logic because it immediately contradicts the assumption that a refugee is a passive object of aid and pity. When I ask my college writing students to read Malkki's work alongside refugee memoirs and testimonies, they often express surprise at the idea that refugees might appropriate the label *refugee* in affirming ways. The stories refugees tell of their own experience are personal and political, historicizing and concrete. Thus, the political logic is best characterized as another kind of ascription, albeit a less alienating one—as a *self*-ascription or a naming of one's own experience.

Rather than ignore refugee stories, an additional complication comes about when state logic appropriates them. Through acts of appropriation, the state logic, with all its powers and economies, frequently has the capacity to dominate, repress, silence, and manipulate the stories refugees tell. The product of these depoliticizing processes results in what Malkki describes as the image of the "ideal" refugee (385). Malkki's fieldwork provides a telling example of this problem. When presenting her findings to administrators from the UNHCR, Malkki explained how the refugees she worked with were imagining their own identity in positive ways. Her audience not only acknowledged her claims, but also replied with anecdotes of their own supporting this political logic. However, they ultimately refused to see the refugees as anything but objects of state capture and the positive dimensions to their identities as problems posed to the distribution of aid. As one administrator said to Malkki, "these people don't *look* like

refugees anymore" (original emphasis 384). If healthy, active, working refugees did not "look" like refugees anymore, then their eligibility for aid was called into question, and thus their acts of self-articulation were misused by those with the power to label refugee experience.

My project focuses on refugees from the African continent and this chapter focuses on the Lost Boys of Sudan specifically, and the image of the ideal refugee is not easily made generalizable across refugee groups. Discourses that inform the image of the ideal refugee are compounded by assumptions and dominant understandings of the places from which refugees are resettled. In the case of the Lost Boys, the category of Africa conjures up vivid images of the colonized black body. In other contexts, the assumptions about different refugee groups work to depoliticize refugee identity in different ways. In what follows, I will give two examples of the state logic at work specific to the idea of *Africa*.

In his book, *The Lost Boys of Sudan*, Mark Bixler explains how aid organizations suspected the refugee camps on the border of Sudan and Ethiopia of being recruiting stations for the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) who wanted to enlist the Lost Boys as child soldiers (60-61). Bixler reports how the journalists and aid workers who interviewed the Lost Boys at this time found their testimonies to be "singularly uniform," indicating that they might have been coached by the SPLA on what to say. In this case, Western assumptions of children as passive victims and rebel groups as exploiting this passivity affected the ways aid workers and journalists perceived the Lost Boys as objects of aid. David Rosen explains how the institutional discourses surrounding the use of child soldiers "presupposes that children are dependent, exploited,

and powerless" (297). Rosen's work on child soldiers credits children with more agency than is allowed by the state logic of aid organizations, UN policy, and Western prejudices that consider Africa to be in a permanently demonized position. The oversimplification of tribal customs and political corruption enables the West to keep these uncritical understandings of Africa in place.

The second example is drawn from James Ferguson's writing on the dominant assumptions of Africa's "place in the world," both metaphorically and economically. Ferguson illustrates how the assumptions NGOs have of Africa bring about material and violent outcomes. He cites a worker from the Save the Children Foundation (SCF) who explains how the organization hires private military companies to "keep the peace" in Africa while they try to do humanitarian work. This SCF worker told Ferguson, "They bang heads very efficiently, the fighting stops—and that's when babies get fed" (14). Ferguson then quotes the founder of another NGO as stating, "[W]hat we're doing here is really not that extreme by African standards" (45). Because NGOs operate transnationally, they play a large role in how discourses of power about "African standards" are circulated.

These examples illustrate how the discourses of power that describe Africa as extreme, violent, corrupt, and backward have material consequences. The hiring of private military companies and the characterization of child soldiers as passive victims show the cyclical nature of language and consequence. Even though these examples are rooted in local contexts, they are translated and shared, just as discourses about refugees are, informing the attitudes and perspectives of those who work with refugees from Africa. These discourses reflect the governmentality of what it means to be a refugee and

an African. Ferguson argues that Africa as a category "continues to be described through a series of lacks and absences, failings and problems, plagues and catastrophes" (2). And, as Gayatri Spivak notes, Africa is a "metonym that points to a great indeterminacy" (188). In the minds of those in the U.S. who work with refugees, Africa is a symbol of economic underdevelopment. Privileged American sponsors might not see the full context of refugee experience because the image of the ideal refugee makes them ill-equipped to listen to the stories of refugees in more reflective and ethical ways.

Effects of the ideal refugee image are compounded by the other dominant discourses surrounding the places from which refugees are resettled. In the case of the Lost Boys of Sudan, Africa itself is a category that is necessary to understand because in a similar fashion to how the refugee is measured against "citizen," the continent of Africa is measured against neoliberal understandings of progress in the "First World." Refugees from Africa must contend with master narratives of development wherein their homeland is seen as underdeveloped and they are seen as products of that underdevelopment. They are seen as non-citizens from "backward" countries and thus ideal objects of foreign aid and rhetorics of uplift, charity, and well-intentioned humanitarianism. If Africa is an idea that lurks in the minds of those in the so-called First World who understand only a "primary, popular interpretation" of the place (Mudimbe xiii), then it follows that the displaced African already fits neatly within the framework of the ideal refugee.

A common mode of uplift is literacy. The perceived connection between literacy and economic development as it pertains to Africa and other regions thought of as "Third World" is wrought with myth and ideology. When Graff observes how one of the most persistent of these myths is how literacy has been used a symbol "the rise of the West and

the triumph of democracy, modernization, and progress" (113-14), he implicitly states

that reading and writing are generally regarded as empowering. The link between literacy

and development in the contexts of refugee communities has several implications. One

implication is that the discourse of resettlement is plagued by misunderstanding,

neocolonial rhetorics that keep refugees in a position of inferiority. In order to preserve

American brands of literacy and education as the unquestioned means of attaining

citizenship, literacy and education in the places from which refugees are resettled must be

characterized as deficient, or in many cases, non-existent. The Lost Boys are often

portrayed in these terms, as having had no experience with education in South Sudan. It

is upon the black body that the "lacks and absences" of "Africa" are projected. Several of

the sponsors cited in this chapter presume that deficiencies in education and literacy are

already present and identifiable in the stories the Lost Boys tell, constituting an agenda

that makes sponsors ignore the Lost Boys' actual experience.

The category of the "African refugee," despite being decontextualized,

depoliticized, and dehistoricized, is never neutral. As Malkki explains, the image of the

ideal refugee figure privileges the affective convention of representing women and

children: "This sentimentalized, composite figure—at once feminine and maternal,

childlike and innocent—is an image that we use to cut across cultural and political

difference, when our intent is to address the very heart of humanity" (388). The state

logic, thus, has patriarchal tendencies. Of course, while most refugees *are* women and

children, emphasizing the image of "helplessness" strengthens patriarchal relationships

between parts of the world that give aid and parts of the world that receive it. In the case

of the Lost Boys of Sudan, even though many of them "came of age" (18 years old in this

case) in the refugee camp before being resettled in the U.S., they were still represented as "boys" and orphaned "children."

In the narratives of refugee experience that follow, I show how discourses of power about the terms *Africa* and *refugee* shape literacy sponsorship, leading to the reproduction of problematic assumptions that have detrimental effects in the lives of refugee students and writers. Refugees are in a constant struggle with those individuals and groups who insist on forcing refugees to fit an ideal image that represents the refugee subject as a "fixed" figure that is always in need of "fixing." Images of refugee identity are contradictory in the way they seem to remain static on the one hand and are regarded as in need of transformation on the other. Yet, through a closer reading of the stories refugees tell, I show how they can also be seen as "emissaries of literacy," advocates for their own literacy-learning.

Applying the Terms *Sponsor* and *Emissary*

Texts written by and about the Lost Boys of Sudan are useful objects of study because they shed light on some contexts of human suffering while obscuring others. The fact that these texts have been published and widely read can help composition teacher-scholars better understand how audiences tend to receive and consume such stories, thus complicating the perceived relationship between sponsor, sponsored, and literacy practice. Brandt's definition of sponsorship includes sponsors who are both "local" and "distant," which is of particular importance to refugee groups and how the idea of "difference" is understood. In this case, sponsors in the local contexts of the U.S., like English teachers and volunteers, often make comparisons between themselves and the

refugees they sponsor based upon the perceived borders between nation, culture, race, and language, reproducing representations of refugee perspectives as "foreign" and "Other."

Because I will apply the terms *sponsor* and *emissary* across a range of texts, I have organized this section according to theme. The texts themselves are separated into two categories: texts written from the perspectives of sponsors that are *about* the Lost Boys of Sudan, mostly written by journalists or people who have sponsored them during their resettlement in the U.S., and texts written from perspectives of the Lost Boys, mostly in the form of memoir. Among the major themes that I have identified in these texts, the first is "transformation." People who write about the Lost Boys typically give a great deal of attention to the changes the Lost Boys went through as they were resettled from refugee camps to the U.S. Often, these transformations operate according to the sponsor's agenda and rely on discourses of cultural and linguistic imperialism, which dramatically oversimplifies the experience of resettlement. The second theme is the uncritical representation of the Lost Boys of Sudan as "ideal refugees" or "model minorities." While they are often characterized as inferior, illiterate, and uneducated, their stories of refugee experience are also celebrated for how they speak to Western sympathies. Their "sojourner" status, as sponsor David Chanoff describes, renders them a kind of "blank slate" upon which Western knowledge and American ways of learning can be written. The last theme, "critical awareness," turns the tables and shows how refugees can act as emissaries of literacy who "speak back" to these "discourses of power" through various rhetorical strategies (Powell 302). By paying close attention to the actual stories refugee writers tell, I show how they strategically resist and accommodate the dominant

discourses of state logic that otherwise seek to limit their physical and rhetorical mobility. Analyzing the texts according to these themes, I offer an alternative approach to the logics of state power governing our understandings of refugee experience, especially in relation to literacy sponsorship.

From the Sponsor's Perspective: Transformation

Perhaps the most significant description of transformation comes in the form of the perceived borders between the U.S. classroom and the refugee camp. Often, the learning experiences of refugees in both locations are regarded as disparate and placed in an asymmetrical, conflicting relationship. For example, in "Education is My Mother and My Father," Chanoff writes about several Sudanese students who were visiting the University of New Hampshire dairy program. Professors there were interested in hosting the Lost Boys because of their experience working with cattle. Early in the piece, Chanoff summarizes the Lost Boys' resettlement in the U.S.: "This is the story of how a historically unique group of young Africans, their minds formed and conditioned by the age-old patterns of life on the Upper Nile savanna, are transforming themselves and being transformed in 21st-century America" (36). Chanoff uses several binary constructions like "ancient"/"21st-century" to support an idea of transformation that falsely describes the actual relationships refugees have to a homeland, to Africa, and to education. These constructions always reproduce and circulate standardized, dominant discourses that render refugees as objects of aid, education as means for "uplifting" and transforming the Other, and "Africa" as a place still beholden to the discourses of early white colonists, explorers, and missionaries. In these respects, Chanoff's article is not unique.

It is important to note that at the time of writing, Chanoff was the academic adviser to the Sudanese Education Fund, a prominent "sponsor" in the lives of the Lost Boys. Also, this article is from the journal *American Scholar*, which has the design of a scholarly journal, but does not seem to be peer-reviewed and claims to be written for a more "general audience." The essay does not draw from any theory about refugee experience; it is very much like a feature article in a magazine and can be regarded as representative of other articles like it (and examples I cite in other parts of this project).

One of Chanoff's first moves is to draw attention to the Lost Boys' physical appearance: "Their skin was jet black—almost blue in the summer sun. All were slender, and many seemed unnaturally gaunt, as if they had been semistarved for a long time" (35). He quickly follows with a description of their supposed disorientation with modern technology: "For one long bewildering moment in that milking shed, the ancient and the modern stood face to face" (36). Chanoff thus makes a metaphorical link between technology as a symbol of development and the observed thin, lean, black bodies of the Lost Boys. These types of comparisons work as a kind of genre convention in articles about the Lost Boys of Sudan, a convention that problematically connects "foreign," "black" bodies to ideologies of development. In these accounts, the Lost Boys' bodies are seen as the physical manifestations of South Sudan's material conditions, a metonymy in which the African body stands in for the perception that the entire continent is one homogeneously underdeveloped, "starved" space.

While I think that it is very important for readers to be able to visualize the very different and very difficult conditions in which the Lost Boys of Sudan lived—such material realities should not be ignored in service of celebrating difference—these

descriptions over-emphasize the Lost Boys' inexperience with technology and other symbols of what a developed, First World nation is supposed to be. I find it troubling that Chanoff can describe the Lost Boys in such absolute terms, that he can say "their minds [have been] formed and conditioned by the age-old patterns of life." But, this is how the Lost Boys of Sudan are almost always introduced to U.S. audiences. In Chapter One I cited a passage from the *New York Times* which uses the same conventions, describing the Lost Boys as "bone-thin African boys confronted by a swirling river of white faces and rolling suitcases, blinking television screens and telephones that rang, inexplicably from the inside of people's pockets" (Corbett 48). These descriptions reinforce very old, very problematic assumptions about a supposedly benevolent, modern U.S. and a seemingly backward and undeveloped Africa, an Africa that is, again, only understood through "lacks and absences" (Ferguson).

Chanoff's binary-driven representations of the Lost Boys emphasize a specific kind of transformation as they journey from an "ancient" home life in Africa to a "modern" school life in the U.S. For example, South Sudan is described as "bounded" and "closed" (37), while the world outside was like a "mystery" (38). The culture of South Sudan is generally described as "insular and static" (45), and as the Lost Boys' journey unfolded, they were required to cross many "mental barriers" (39), their resettlement in the U.S. largely characterized as a period of great "confusion" and "disorientation" (42). As home increasingly became a place to which the Lost Boys were unable to return, "education," writes Chanoff, "began to seem like a mission" (40).

According to these descriptions, the Lost Boys once were "lost" but then were "found" in the U.S. classroom, an "amazing grace" narrative that plays up to the

ideologies of American exceptionalism. Not mentioned here is how the price of being

found was that the Lost Boys were required to pay back the government for the cost of

the plane tickets that brought them to the U.S. (see Mabeya 133 and "Out of Africa" 35).

V.Y. Mudimbe examinines similar narratives of transformation as they have been

constructed in colonial literature. Mudimbe describes how Europeans thought of

themselves as somehow "saving" Africa through the process of colonization. Mudimbe

explains, "Africa is a 'refused continent' and a place of negative extremes...And yet,

paradoxically, this 'refused space' could one day be converted into another body" (9).

Africa, from the colonist perspective, could only be saved through the "conversion" of its

people into other bodies--Christian subjects. The same might be said for the resettled

African refugee who is sent to host nations like the U.S. with the expectation of

converting to a new body, an English-speaking, neo-liberal citizen. I do not think we

should underestimate the pervasiveness of this narrative of transformation as it poses real,

material consequences in the everyday lives of refugees, especially in the relationships

they forge with literacy sponsors.

A logic of conversion is evident in Chanoff's text as he moves to the subject of

education. He explains that, for the Lost Boys, "the biggest hurdle was accommodating

themselves to the American way of learning. Educators in Africa generally tend to

emphasize memorization rather than critical thinking" (43). Chanoff portrays an African

educational setting that privileges memorization and appears deficient compared to a U.S.

education that promotes "critical thinking," though it is unclear what Chanoff takes that

to mean. Street argues that when orality and literacy are compared in this way, an "us vs.

them" dichotomy is reproduced, demonstrating a "fundamentally ethnocentric" view of

literacy (7). Not only is a separation imposed on refugee students by this dichotomy, but so is a distinctly unidirectional view of literacy. Articles like Chanoff's fail to mention that many of these African educational structures were put in place by European colonizers and that an emphasis on memorization at an early age can be found not only in Europe, but in the U.S. as well. This common educational practice is not at all unique to "Africa." Again, a "backward" vs. "progressive" dichotomy is falsely constructed. The Lost Boys are seen as having to adapt and assimilate while sponsors are expected neither to change nor accommodate. The Lost Boys crossed several different kinds of borders such as those between Sudan and the U.S. and between the refugee camp and the classroom. In each instance of border-crossing, unique and critical literacy strategies assisted their survival. Despite this reality, the unequal power dynamics between people in the so-called First World and Third World continue to shape literacy sponsorship, keeping refugee students and writers in a subordinate position in relation to those who sponsor them.

Like Chanoff, who describes the Lost Boys' confrontation with modern technology and education, Joan Hecht, author of *The Journey of the Lost Boys*, also relies on discourses of power about African refugee experience in service of her own bias and agenda. For example, Hecht, who was named "2005 Author of the Year" by the International Promoting Outstanding Writers (POW) Book Awards, tells of how before their resettlement, "Each boy was required to attend a three-day orientation class in an effort to prepare him for his final journey from the Stone Age of Africa to the 21st century of America. However, nothing could prepare these boys for the new sights and wonders they were about to see and experience" (105). Despite Hecht's best efforts to sponsor and

support the Lost Boys, she demeans Africa, calling it "Stone Age," repeating and

emphasizing the dominant view Americans have of Africa. As Hecht dramatizes the ways

in which the Lost Boys interact with the "wonders" of American culture, she describes in

detail their excitement at sleeping on new mattresses with new blankets:

> As each boy took his turn lying under the blanket, he and the others began
>
> to chatter excitedly in their native tongue. And then in a grand finale, they
>
> began to cluck like chickens. It's actually a clicking sound that some of
>
> them make with their tongues when they become excited or awed by
>
> something. It sounds similar to the noise one makes when calling a horse,
>
> but in their native country it is the equivalent of saying 'Wow!' or
>
> 'Awesome!' Imagine their response when laying their heads on a soft down
>
> pillow for the very first time—yep, there was a lot of clucking going on
>
> that day! (115)

In my view, the same logic that describes Africa as "ancient" or locates it in the "Stone

Age" dictates this description of the Lost Boys' indigenous languages. This passage

makes evident that Hecht's book is written for outsiders, that the Lost Boys themselves

are not imagined as readers of this text. Moreover, this is one way in which literacy

sponsors like Hecht and Chanoff make unfair, unjust, and in Hecht's case, racist

generalizations of the people that they have chosen to sponsor. Their depictions of

refugees please a reader who is like them, who is white, American, and middle class,

someone who might donate money to their cause, someone who knows little of Africa

and its people and regards these "boys" patronizingly. Even if Hecht has the best of

intentions, and most sponsors do, she unintentionally compares the Lost Boys to animals

who "cluck" nonsensically for the effect of including vivid description in her writing, not acknowledging that there is a long and ugly history behind the comparison of the black, African body to an animal.

The cycle of sponsorship continues as sponsors produce texts like these to increase awareness of the issues that surround refugee resettlement, while the ways in which they choose to describe these refugees continues the legacy of American exceptionalism, condescension, and cultural and linguistic imperialism. Descriptions of transformation have a particular ideological agenda. The sinister will to transform the Other on the part of the privileged sponsor is my major point of concern. Discourses of "uplift" and rhetorics of transformation, at least in the case of the Lost Boys of Sudan, have severe implications for race, development, literacy, and identity.

From the Sponsor's Perspective: The Image of the Ideal Refugee

Complex, though unreflective, feelings toward concepts like "Americanization" or assimilation come about when sponsors uncritically celebrate refugee identity as being somehow pure, childlike, and innocent. While Malkki shows how the image of the ideal refugee serves to depoliticize refugee experience and renders individual refugees as passive objects of aid, the image of the ideal refugee in relation to literacy can take on a slightly different meaning. Much of this has to do with the direction of the imposed transformations described above or the kinds of assimilation that refugees are expected to work toward achieving. For example, Hecht laments the assimilation of the Lost Boys, not because they are losing home cultures, languages, traditions, etc., but because they are losing some of their dependence on aid that makes them such valuable objects of

sponsorship. In the following passage, Hecht comments how at first the Lost Boys were

unfamiliar with common, American technologies like refrigerators and toilets, but

adapted quickly:

> The need for them to learn such things, at their ages, is perhaps what so
>
> endeared them to us as volunteers. But they were fast learners, eagerly
>
> soaking up all the information given them like a dry sponge. In no time at
>
> all, they were adapting to Western civilization, and some became
>
> extremely 'Americanized' in the process. The desire to succeed at all costs
>
> became overpowering for many of them, who initially spent their Saturday
>
> and Sunday afternoons on the soccer field or in church, but eventually
>
> devoted their entire weekends and all free time to school and work. (115)

As Hecht notes, the fact that the Lost Boys seemed unfamiliar with "everyday"

technologies made them appear "endearing" to their sponsors. But, she fails to

acknowledge the position of privilege that produces this paternalistic attitude towards

them. As the Lost Boys learned more, this "endearing" quality gave way to a greater

sense of agency on their part. Hecht claims she felt like they were losing something. She

sentimentalizes the very thing that in other places in her text make the Lost Boys seem

backward and prehistoric. To complicate matters, Hecht juxtaposes leisure activities like

playing soccer with the "desire to succeed at all costs." Hecht assumes that American

beliefs about hard work and success as symbols of the Lost Boys' transformation. In the

process, the supposed innocence of the Lost Boys is idealized and lamented. While these

sentiments seem contradictory, I think that the relationship of power remains intact

because in both cases, sponsors fetishize the Lost Boys' refugee identity, and when they

no longer fit this ideal, sponsors become suspicious.

Similar to how the transformations of resettlement can be idealized, the stories refugees tell can be idealized and uncritically celebrated. In the introduction to *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky*, Judy A. Bernstein writes about what it was like to mentor and sponsor three Lost Boys of Sudan, taking them to restaurants, grocery stores, and clothes shopping. While these are all activities of sponsorship that entail different kinds of literacy practices, Bernstein specifically discusses reading and writing when she explains the book's exigency:

> In the beginning, their accounts came on pale green composition book pages produced folded or crumpled from their pockets. But crisp white computer paper and Internet files soon replaced those first precious pieces. Touched by their accounts and outraged by the situation, I want the world to hear of their tragic and remarkable experiences and to know what is happening in Sudan. (xxiii)

Bernstein describes the Lost Boys as emissaries who are no longer "speechless." They are, instead, enabled by acts of storytelling to translate and share their refugee experiences with "the world." Unlike the realm of humanitarian aid described by Malkki in which refugee stories are listened to with suspicion, an audience is implied here who is willing to listen attentively and even be moved and affected by the stories the Lost Boys have to tell. Bernstein also takes on the role of "sympathizer," stating that she was "touched" then "outraged," thus demonstrating the purpose behind the book, to have the world "hear of their tragic and remarkable experiences."

Despite the agency the Lost Boys seem to achieve in Bernstein's description, she

risks diminishing them by unreflectively celebrating their stories. She characterizes them as "precious," which belies a certain brand of liberal sympathy that reminds readers of the distance that can exist between sponsor and sponsored. I am reminded of my own introduction to the Lost Boys. They were described to me as "special" and "exceptional" students, and the discourse of the "model minority" seemed to follow them throughout college. Describing the relationship between sponsor and sponsored in this context can often slip into the dominant discursive formations and master narratives in which a privileged, modern U.S. seeks to pity and then aid a supposed backward, un-modern, victimized Africa and refugee.

Rather than value South Sudanese culture and the experiences the Lost Boys had before their flight to the asylum-seeking apparatus of the First World, sponsors like Chanoff, Hecht, and Bernstein idealize only the refugee aspect of their identity and then only in the service of an English/U.S.-centric agenda of transformation. Chanoff, for instance, bemoans the fact that "Plato, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Galileo, Michaelangelo, Marx, and Freud were not recognized names" to the Lost Boys because of they had an "utter lack of awareness of world civilization outside of East Africa" (42). But, not all is lost because Chanoff sees this "lack of awareness" as an opportunity to fill the minds of the Lost Boys as if they were empty vessels. Chanoff celebrates the Lost Boys' "journey," their "sojourner" status, because it makes them receptive to the kinds of Western knowledge needed for successful citizenship in a neoliberal democracy. Chanoff writes, "They, who were born into the most insular and static of cultures, have evolved into a community of sojourners...They understand, first, that knowledge is a portable commodity, to be gathered like gold at each stop along the way for use at the next" (45).

The world civilization, the knowledge, and the "gold" that are implied here are, of course, distinctly Western and English-centric, though this bias goes unacknowledged in the article. The Lost Boys are no longer seen as citizens of South Sudan, but instead are cast in the discourse of the model minority, those who have left their violent, insular, prehistoric world behind in order to be saved by the U.S.

Chanoff also interviews teachers who "cage" the Lost Boys within discourses of the ideal refugee and the model minority. One teacher does so in a direct comparison with native-born American students: "Most American students, if they don't get Descartes or something else, think, okay, I'll take care of it tomorrow. They can just go on to the next thing. The Sudanese are very disturbed by not knowing. Knowing how much they don't know disturbs them" (45). From my own observations, when African refugee students are compared to American students, it is primarily African American students to whom they are compared, which creates a false and racist binary. While African refugee students like the Lost Boys are problematically configured as a blank slate upon which the ideals of neoliberal citizenship can be written, African American students are seen as resistant and unassimilable, as the wrong kind of citizen. Such impulses reflect an American brand of racism in which African Americans are unfairly compared to other black bodies, other "African" bodies, in a way that devalues African American cultures and experiences— nor is Africa valued in these instances. It is erased in order to celebrate the sojourner experience, to preserve American and Western educational traditions. Holding the Lost Boys up as model students who are eager to learn also works to infantilize the Lost Boys—still labeled "boy" despite being college-aged adults. Chanoff concludes his article by quoting a professor who claims that the Lost Boys are "like *Lord of the Flies* in

reverse" (45), a comment that solidifies their infantalized, sojourner status and perpetuates the myth of Africa as a dark, uncivilized, and backward place.

While I address the image of the ideal refugee primarily as it is manifested through language, Malkki explains that there "are more established institutional contexts, uses, and conventions for pictures of refugees than for displaced persons' own narrative accounts of exile. Indeed, some of these visual conventions seem to speed up the evaporation of history and narrativity" (386-87). It is no surprise that images are more circulated than stories, especially given Malkki's example of the administrator's idea about what refugees should look like. Through an analysis of images produced by such institutions, Malkki shows how images circulate and reproduce the state logic that governs the category of *refugee*. Lilie Chouliaraki describes this kind of visual reproduction in terms of the "omnipresence of the image" (49). Discourses of power surrounding visual representations of suffering do not, Chouliaraki argues, "provide us with tools to analyse how visual staging produces meaning" (55). Images are very easily "translated" and "shared" and are transnationally mobile discourses because they seem to transcend language barriers and imply a kind of immediacy with the suffering depicted, hard evidence of the ideal refugee. As Malkki and Chouliaraki demonstrate, images are just as rhetorically constructed as narratives, but audiences sometimes do not think they are.

This is the paradox brought about by literacy sponsorship that crosses these kinds of borders, whether national like the borders between the U.S. and Sudan or socially constructed like the perceived borders between "American" and "African" ways of learning. Working with the Lost Boys to produce a book about their experience can be

considered a positive form of sponsorship, but holding their stories as "precious" rather than seeing them as complex descriptions of global inequality betrays the potential for literacy sponsorship to rework the unfair audience expectations placed upon refugees and their stories. Literacy sponsorship can be materially beneficial to those being sponsored, which can act as a band-aid for global inequality and sometimes even create a sense of solidarity between people who have extremely different life experiences. Yet, master narratives and the actual histories of inequality are allowed to go unquestioned. When the stories of the Lost Boys are seen as "precious," this preciousness is evidence of an unacknowledged position of privilege occupied by the literacy sponsor.

From the Emissary's Perspective: Critical Awareness

In this section, refugee students and writers speak back to the discourses of state logic that have been discussed above. Sometimes they do so by resisting, challenging, questioning, or identifying those discourses. Sometimes they do so by choosing to accommodate them because of the currency, or symbolic capital, such discourses carry. In either scenario, refugee students and writers demonstrate a critical awareness of the many discourses, conventions, and expectations placed upon them. In this way, they act as "emissaries of literacy," modeling for readers the kind of awareness we all must bring to narratives of refugee experience and human suffering.

Refugee identity is vexed by the popular and unjust discourses promoted by literacy sponsorship, but this vexation is not absolute. Close attention to the specific perspectives of refugees disrupts these dominant discursive conventions. Self-awareness can be cultivated by refugees, as Malkki observes, when they come to "appropriate the

category as a vital, positive dimension of their collective identity in exile" (377). That is, the term *refugee* itself can hold positive meaning for whole groups of people and is not bound to national borders in the same ways that other understandings of identity might be. As the term's meaning is developed for groups or individuals, refugees gain "a certain level of self-knowledge" about their own conditions and concerns (381). At the same time, expressions of a more political understanding of the term *refugee* can be wrought with a systematic silencing by aid organizations and popular media that insists upon more recognizable descriptions of what it means to be a refugee. Therefore, Malkki argues that this self-knowledge is inhibited by efforts to silence and standardize what should be more complex and developed understandings of refugee identity.

According to Malkki, refugees are "frequently regarded [by aid organizations] as simply unreliable informants," are characterized as "dishonest, prone to exaggeration, even crafty and untrustworthy," and their stories are considered "too messy, subjective, unmanageable, [and] hysterical" (384-85). When Malkki describes refugees as "speechless emissaries," she argues that distrust of the refugee narrator calls attention to issues of "voice" and "silencing" and the power dynamics by which the co-opting of refugee voices takes place. Refugee writers sometimes speak back to these instances of silencing by describing them in detail for a general and popular audience. For example, one of the Lost Boys featured in *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky,* Benson Deng[2], explains how the Lost Boys were sometimes silenced in the refugee camp, especially at times when they might have had opportunities to act as emissaries of their own interests and perspectives. As Deng reveals,

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[2]   For clarification: "Deng" is a common name of the Dinka culture in South Sudan, and is also the last name of the narrator in *What is the What*.

Any visitor who came to the camp could only go around the community accompanied by three officers. When they came to visit our house, one officer would arrive first and instruct us, "There is a visitor, so please keep quiet and we will explain everything to him." They didn't want us to speak. If the visitor asked about something, they were ready with an answer that made themselves look good. (278)

In this instance, Deng shows how the Lost Boys are not allowed to speak to visitors. Instead, they are "shown" to visitors, forced to play the role of speechless emissaries, not trusted to speak on behalf of the camp, their own group, or even the people in their own tent, but possessing a bodily presence that fit the categorical definition of refugee. Deng, as a speechless emissary, is put in a position in which only his body may speak. It speaks as the voice of the ideal refugee, the black body in the camp, the passive object of humanitarian aid.

A more direct challenge to these discourses of power can be found in the statement of one of the Lost Boys Chanoff interviews. Immediately after Chanoff observes how education in the refugee camp relied on memorization, he quotes Sudanese student Jacob Mabil, who explains that in the refugee camp, "10 people might share one book. If you share that book, you might have it only for one day, so you have to memorize everything. You won't see that book again until you have to read the next chapter" (43). According to Chanoff, education in the camp is characterized as a severe lack of resources and an ideological obstacle to be overcome in order for the Lost Boys to adapt to "the American way of learning." However, Jacob observes that his ways of learning were actually dependent upon the material conditions of the camp. In this case,

memorization as a learning strategy is not easily explained away as a cultural difference. Jacob's self-awareness of how and why he needed memorization is the real literacy strategy that should be observed. Because of Jacob's understanding of his material conditions, he is able to articulate how learning contexts affect learning strategies, a topic not taken up in articles like Chanoff's. Jacob's awareness is not surprising in itself, only evidence that refugee students like him are not merely passive receptacles of education. What is surprising is how Chanoff quotes Jacob then ignores his statements in service of his own agenda. As a literacy sponsor, Chanoff misses an opportunity to examine what refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan can bring to their U.S. educational experiences and instead relies upon and reproduces a dominant, one-dimensional image of the African refugee.

Chanoff's argument represents a co-opting of a refugee's story that supports an agenda only meant to illustrate the great distances—geographical and seemingly "intellectual"—the Lost Boys had to cross, reasserting the global pervasiveness of a U.S. superiority complex. Jacob's insights into learning are ignored in service of this agenda. The problematic that arises out of this rhetorical situation is one that not only shows how refugee stories can be overwritten, but also highlights how the complicated transnational relationships between the U.S. and Africa are represented as unidirectional, how African refugees are expected to assimilate to the "American way of learning" but themselves have little to contribute. Jacob's working knowledge of going to school in a refugee camp shows that he thinks about how education works in different contexts, which according to even the most conservative composition pedagogy, constitutes a valuable form of critical thinking.

The self-awareness cultivated by refugees—which so far has come in the form of positive reappropriation of the term *refugee* and connecting material conditions to learning strategies—is a resource for better understanding the contexts of literacy sponsorship and is an example of how refugee students and writers act as "emissaries of literacy," or sponsors of their own literacy practices. The narrator in Dave Eggers' novel *What is the What*, Valentino Achak Deng, makes a startling confession that the Lost Boys chose to tell their story by sometimes exaggerating the details of their journey. Deng poses a challenge to the dominant model of literacy sponsorship because it works against the expectations we have of refugee students and writers. As he explains,

> sponsors and newspaper reporters and the like expect the stories to have certain elements, and the Lost Boys have been consistent in their willingness to oblige. Survivors tell the stories the sympathetic want, and that means making them as shocking as possible. My own story includes enough small embellishments that I cannot criticize the accounts of others. (21)

One reading of this passage would be to look upon the Lost Boys and other refugees with suspicion, as proof of the refugee as an unreliable narrator. This confession could easily be used to support humanitarian aid agencies' attitude that refugees are not to be trusted and are prone to exaggeration and hysteria. For me, Deng's candor has a different effect, calling for reflection on the part of the reader. The embellishment of facts described by the narrator should not be read as dishonesty on the part of the Lost Boys, but as evidence of the pressure to meet audience expectations. It is a bold and rhetorically savvy move that recasts suspicion upon those who consume stories of refugee experience, upon

readers—"sponsors and newspaper reporters and the like"—the uncritically sympathetic. In this instance, Eggers' narrator acts as another kind of emissary, insightfully voicing how the rhetorical situation between the sympathetic and the suffering should be read.

In "Rhetorics of Displacement: Constructing Identities in Forced Relocations," Powell gives a reading of the same passage from *What is the What*. She observes that "For Deng, creating a narrative asked for by the UN workers was a means for leaving the camps; indeed, the label 'lost boys' evokes a symbolic narrative—they are lost until they are able to write their story, and if the story is good enough, they can come to the United States for an education" (307). In many ways, this is true. These narratives were composed in order to serve the specific purpose of resettlement, but Powell seems to conflate the UN interviews and the stories the Lost Boys tell to other audiences. When Deng explains that "survivors tell the stories the sympathetic want," he implicates all sympathetic ears, including and especially those who would sponsor refugees like him. Powell seems to place the emphasis on the humanitarian organizations that are responsible for resettlement, but in fact, these narratives are also shaped more by the governmentality of refugee identity, which might include a wider public of Western audiences such as teachers, sponsors, newspaper reporters, and other liberal-minded people who would welcome refugees to the so-called New World.

Such narratives, in light of the observations made by Powell, Malkki, and Nyers, could be regarded as artifacts of naming, or examples of how the power to name another's experience is manifest in concrete ways and carries material consequences. Powell describes "rhetorics of displacement" as "those strategies that account for discourses of power and discourses of identity," which "are deeply embedded in the resistances to the

subjectivities inscribed for the displaced by those who have power over them, including tyrannical governments, United Nations (UN) aid workers, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administrators, and legislators" (302). Powell's articulation of strategies is helpful, especially in explaining how they draw attention to the power of state agencies to draw the boundaries of refugee experience, but again, her discussion leaves out the role of the literacy sponsor, or more broadly, the role of readers who also consume refugee narratives, especially best-selling, award-nominated books like *What is the What*. Powell's discussion of rhetorics is helpful for understanding how such narratives both conform to and "speak back" to "discourses of power" (302), but in a wider sense, the literacy strategies of refugees often go unaddressed in these discussions of resistance. Additionally, the fact that narratives of refugee experience are popular with Western audiences is one major driving force behind the institutional power Powell discusses.

I feel it is important to note how *What is the What* is a novel written by an outsider to refugee experience (a U.S.-born, English-speaking, white man). This provokes some important critiques. One Sudanese-identified woman I met told me how she thought the book was emotionally powerful, but it was unfortunate that it had to be a white man who wrote it, who "gave" voice to the Lost Boy in the story. Although Eggers names *What is the What* a "novel," the text is very much like an ethnography since Eggers interviewed and shadowed his informant for several years as he gathered the stories for the book. In the preface, Valentino Achak Deng, the Lost Boy about whom the book is written, explains this problem:

It should be known to the readers that I was very young when some of the

events in the book took place, and as a result we simply had to pronounce
What is the What a novel. I could not, for example, recount some
conversations that took place seventeen years ago. However it should be
noted that all the major events in the book are true. The book is
historically accurate, and the world I have known is not different from the
one depicted within these pages. (xiv)

Deng understands that when readers see Eggers has tried to tell a refugee's story, they might doubt the story's authenticity. Readers, though, should be no more suspicious of this "novel" than they should be of any other ethnographic account. For instance, we cannot dismiss the critique that Eggers is a white, American man. His role in this work is contradictory. In one sense, Eggers exploits and commodifies the Lost Boys' story from a position of privilege. Yet, as an outsider, Western audiences might find this text to be more "authentic" because it was told by outsider. He cannot escape his white privilege, but in the minds of readers in the U.S., he performs the role of sponsor, helping Deng tell his story.

In this passage, Deng's own words demonstrate a level of audience awareness, care, and concern. In the novel, like in Malkki's research, audiences do not always reciprocate this caring stance. Whether it is the distribution of aid, the anxiety of INS resettlement interviews, or the celebration of the Lost Boys' written stories, the Lost Boys demonstrate a critical awareness of audience expectations. They constantly invoke politicized and historicized meanings of the term *refugee* while audiences (institutional and popular) try to force refugee experience into a more familiar form, befitting the master narrative of humanitarian aid.

Reader and writer, or audience and storyteller, are shown to be in a reciprocal, though unequal, relationship: "survivors tell the stories the sympathetic want," i.e., both roles participate in the production of sympathy as a discourse of power. When Eggers and Deng describe the complexities of the Lost Boys' "master" narrative and situate the telling of the Lost Boys' story within the power relations between the "survivor" and the "sympathizer," they illustrate the complexities of narrating experiences of suffering. Yet, there is also the role of the reader to consider and the degree to which readers should reflect more actively in how they consume narratives of suffering. Sympathy, pity for the downtrodden, the desire to uplift the Other are all reactions sponsors might have to texts like these, but these reactions are never innocent and are likewise informed by the many discourses of power surrounding refugee experience.

The production of "sympathy" has been studied more extensively by Chouliaraki as well as Luc Boltanski, who approach sympathy through a theory of "distant suffering." Boltanski explains that "distant suffering" is the relationship set up by various manifestations of the media, particularly news stories where "on the one hand there is an unfortunate who suffers and on the other a spectator who views the suffering without undergoing the same fate and without being directly exposed to the same misfortune" (114). Books like *What is the What* and *They Poured Fire On Us From the Sky* are compelling examples of distant suffering narratives because they depict events that are both "distant" and "local" (to recall Brandt's words), a reminder of the forms literacy sponsorship might take, but are also an example of how stories of suffering and trauma attached to refugee experience can circulate transnationally. The relationship between spectator, sufferer, and text has its own set of genre conventions and audience

expectations that in turn informs literacy sponsorship. Chouliaraki applies much of Boltanski's theory of "distant suffering" to the discourse of "world news." She argues that "our relationship with distant suffering is made possible, or thinkable at all, by means of this discourse" (4). The production of sympathy in texts representing human suffering, whether journalists' accounts, memoirs, the perspectives of sponsors, aid workers, tutors, or teachers, is a discourse of power shaped by audience expectations.

Paying closer attention to the interview process the Lost Boys went through also helps demonstrate how the awareness expressed by refugees challenges the conventions of the expected, "ideal" refugee narratives. As discussed above, composers of such texts are not ignorant of these expectations. These interviews were the cause of great stress among the Lost Boys of Sudan because they were under the impression that the lawyers and representatives who interviewed them were looking for specific answers, or "the stories the sympathetic want." For example, one of the authors of *They Poured Fire* explains,

> I was worried about … passing the INS interview that some of my friends, who, I thought, were more intelligent than me, had failed. But I soon learned that the INS interview didn't demand being clever or intelligent. It needed me to relax and listen carefully to the interviewer's questions and then answer the questions simply, as well as I could. (279-80)

The narrator of *What is the What* relates a similar anxiety about the interviews:

> I had been briefed by many other Lost Boys about what questions to expect, but the ones they asked me varied slightly. There was a majority of Sudanese who insisted that one embellish as often as possible, to be sure

> to claim the deaths of all of one's family and known relatives. I had
>
> decided, against the advice of many, to answer all the questions as
>
> truthfully as possible. (493)

Both narrators are set apart from the "majority of Sudanese" and choose to take a more,

seemingly honest approach after having seen friends go through their interviews. What is

troubling here is not that these narrators set themselves apart or that other Lost Boys

would have chosen to exaggerate their stories, but that the situation and the audience for

those interviews projected expectations about the hope of resettlement upon the refugees.

The interviews were extremely high stakes rhetorical situations, and refugees were faced

with the choice of being "honest" or of telling the kind of story they thought their

audience wanted to hear. Eggers' narrator, despite his confidence in giving truthful

answers, leaves the interview "puzzled and depressed," and continues to ponder:

"Certainly that was not the sort of interview that would decide whether or not a man

traveled across the world and became the citizen of a different nation" (494). The anxiety

that the Lost Boys express regarding the interview process stems from the

commodification of refugee narratives and the pressure imposed by aid organizations and

sponsors to adhere to the belief that those who receive the "gift" of resettlement must fit

the form of the ideal refugee.

The interview process shows some of the networks through which refugees must

navigate, networks in which policies and regulations are difficult to interpret but dictate

what kind of refugee the Lost Boys are expected to be, how their stories are valued, and

how their voices are commodified. The tendency for their stories to become standardized

is not necessarily a sign of dishonesty, but is a symptom of their dehistoricization by

institutional powers. At least two distinct parties are invested in the commodification of these specific refugee narratives: humanitarian aid organizations (including entities like the UN and the U.S.) and literacy sponsors who read stories about refugee experience. The narrative presented to readers in the form of a memoir or Eggers' novel serves as the *exception* that proves the rule. We believe we are being told a unique, trustworthy, ideal refugee narrative, not a standard, rote story, even while we expect this "unique" story to have certain elements (Powell 308). Like humanitarian aid organizations, readers of these stories exercise a paradoxical power to deem the individual's published story as valuable and inspiring, yet are still able to cast suspicion upon those who try to tell a story that might be fabricated—even though that might be the kind of story readers expect to encounter. Readers expect certain narrative conventions and thus are responsible for their reproduction.

The memoir *War Child* by Emmanuel Jal provides an even more nuanced understanding of the image of the ideal refugee and its implications for literacy sponsorship. Jal was a Lost Boy who was recruited as a child soldier, thus he has a different perspective than the narrator of *What is the What* or the writers of *They Poured Fire On Us From the Sky*. While acts of violence were committed against him, Jal also commits acts of violence against others, causing him to reflect on an additional world of discourses. That is, in addition to the labels "refugee" and "Africa," Jal also has to grapple with the discourses of power surrounding "child soldiers." Jal explains how his child soldier experience negatively affected how potential sponsors viewed him. For me, his explanation helps reveal the diverse perspectives and hierarchies embedded within the category of "Africa." While American sponsors might view Africa as backward,

unmodern, and a place fragmented by catastrophe, people in African nations like Kenya also hold similar views of regions like South Sudan. "Refugee" is likewise a term of derision. For instance, after Jal is taken in by an English aid worker, Emma, he feels untrusting stares cast his way by teachers and students at schools in Kenya. Jal tells of how one student bullied him by calling him "Black boy, gorilla boy, refugee boy," and how the students would laugh at his "clothes and skin" (196). Stereotypes and stigmas cling to the Lost Boys in these parts of the world because their refugee status and their dark skin marks them as Other. Since Jal's history as a child soldier seems to follow him from school to school, even other Sudanese look on him with suspicion.

Jal also comments on the literacy sponsors in his life:

> Compared to many, I was lucky because Emma's friends tried to look after me and used money from a fund set up in her name to send me to school again. But they were used to Africa, used to children like me who roamed wild, and can't have been surprised when I got expelled from my next school for fighting ... I tried as hard as I could to study, sometimes passing exams, but finding it difficult to concentrate and never catching up with the other children my age. (199)

Not only are discourses of power about refugees, child soldiers, and skin color "translated and shared" by Americans and UN aid workers, they are also circulated by those that surrounded him in his daily life. Ever present in Jal's testimony is an attention to his own material conditions. He acknowledges that because he was taken in by an aid worker and given the opportunity to go to school outside a refugee camp, he enjoys certain material privileges compared to other Lost Boys. He also acknowledges that money, a place to

sleep, and clothing are provided by other people, even while they might have low expectations of him based on stigmas attached to being a South Sudanese refugee and child soldier. While it is the sponsorship of these material needs that grant him access to education (English education, specifically), it is the circulation of these standardized discourses that pose the greatest threat to his education. Literacy sponsors everywhere seem to allow dominant discourse to inform their interaction with those they perceive need to be sponsored.

In Emma, Jal finds a different kind of sponsor than Chanoff , Bernstein, or Hecht. He explains, "Fearless, independent, and sometimes reckless, she was different from any other aid worker and soon earned herself a reputation among them for not following the rules. But Emma didn't care—all she wanted was to bring education to a people desperate for it" (177). The "rules" that Emma does not follow seem to come from her dedication to closing a certain distance between the sponsor and the sponsored. Not only does she adopt Jal, but before that, she marries a commander in the SPLA, the group for whom Jal served as a child soldier. This cross-cultural marriage seems to be the root cause of her "rebel" reputation amongst other (white) aid workers. Emma thus gains access to the front lines of battle, sees the use of child soldiers first-hand, and forms bonds with refugees that other aid workers cannot. Jal explains that she was like a "white Sudanese," that "She was one in her heart and lived uncomplainingly with my people among the malaria, food shortages, and violence of war zones" (177). In this way, Emma puts herself in the midst of the material realities of the people she works with, which is very unlike other aid workers who might enjoy a certain amount of distance from the refugees they support.

This is not to say that what Emma does is more "right." As a person, she has her own passions and reasons for implicating herself within the lives of South Sudanese children. Emma does, however, show that sponsorship can take a variety of forms, that sponsorship can be both "distant" and "local." Perhaps because of her Jal becomes a staunch advocate for bringing education to South Sudan, believing that it is the only chance his people have for freedom. Jal's experience complicates some of my own observations in this chapter. I have pointed out that it is unethical for sponsors to uncritically celebrate American education and ignore the stories of refugees. He makes claims that he longs for education, that his people desire education above all else, and that it must be brought to them. It is difficult to make an argument about this. It would be hard, given the observations I have made, to dismiss Jal's perspective and argue that any form of education and literacy that comes into South Sudan from the outside is merely another violent, colonial project. However, it is one thing for Jal and other Lost Boys to ask for this kind of help, and it is quite another for American and European educators and aid organizations to dictate and impose "American ways of learning" upon the South Sudanese. Literacy sponsorship needs to be re-imagined through refugee experience because the stories refugees tell and the ways in which they choose to tell them can show sponsors how to help people in more responsible ways. In the conclusion, I propose that sponsorship be coupled with selected connotations of *emissary* in an effort to show a more collaborative, dialectic re-imagining of literacy sponsorship.

Conclusion: Emissaries of Literacy

By examining how sponsors can view refugee students and writers as emissaries

of literacy, I refigure literacy sponsorship in more deliberate and transparent ways. The notion "emissaries of literacy," as it is explored in the texts cited above, does not so much mean a commodification of refugees as model minorities or spokespeople for an entire continent or exiled population, but instead indicates a model for a kind of literacy of refugeeness that sponsors should emulate. It is less to do with ascribing agency to those who seem to have none, but is more of an attitude with which literacy sponsors, composition teacher-scholars, and readers should approach narratives of refugee experience. In this way, literacy sponsorship is refigured in a way that goes beyond "best practices," or officially sanctioned, prescribed methods for transforming the refugee from a "blank slate" into an idealized citizen of a neoliberal democracy. Seeing refugee students and writers as emissaries of literacy fosters an attitude that allows literacy sponsors to understand how refugees can be their own sponsors of literacy. In each example above, the Lost Boys learned from various literacy sponsors, but ultimately conferred with each other or decided on their own how to best approach each rhetorical situation, whether it was an INS interview, a class in a refugee camp, or identifying stereotypes of themselves. Sponsors need to learn from these strategies if literacy is to be understood more fully in global contexts.

Attaching the term *emissary* to literacy presumes a local expertise on the part of refugee students and writers and fosters cultural respect of the places from which they are resettled. The responsibility of the sponsor is to listen attentively and to account for positions of privilege, to unlearn racism and assumptions about economic and educational development in places labeled "Third World." This opens up space for taking the notion seriously that people can be their own sponsors of literacy, that they do not always have

to be "uplifted" by those who are in relative positions of power, whether that power be linguistic, economic, racialized, classed, gendered, etc.

Certainly, people do need and want help from those who teach, study, or enjoy literacy and writing, but we must engage in these acts of sponsorship without white-washing the experiences or expertise of others. In the lives of resettled refugee students and writers, most literacy experiences and practices are forced into one of two categories by sponsors: deficient or transformative. Practices associated with Africa and refugee camps are seen as examples of "lacking," obstacles which must be overcome. U.S. brands of literacy, in turn, are regarded as liberating, transformative, and empowering, are seen as the necessary and sole means of addressing perceived deficiency. What we are left with is a state-interested notion of sponsorship that has a top-down force which limits the physical and rhetorical mobility of refugees and is informed by the many dominant discourses that govern their lives. Instead of asking the sponsored to unlearn the strategies of their previous educational experiences, an important method literacy sponsors should consider is to unlearn what they think they know about literacy-learning in the contexts of refugee experience and transnational mobility. In our relative positions of privilege, more self-reflective work needs to be done if we are to take seriously the notion that we learn from our students, a Freirian philosophy that seems to be forgotten when we start to work with the refugee students from Africa.

My readings of the texts above offer an alternative approach to interacting with refugee experience. First, literacy sponsors must acknowledge their own participation in the circulation of discourse intended to depict refugee students as passive objects of aid. Not only do sponsors reproduce discourses of power, but in a more global sense, as

people who reap the benefits of living in the U.S., we are implicated in the lives of refugees, regardless of how removed we think ourselves to be. For instance, Boltanksi proposes that "spectators" of distant suffering must embrace a kind of "active responsibility." He advances that "certain agents [readers, sponsors, researchers, etc.] realise that they are themselves in a causal relationship with this suffering as agents of an oppressive system" (76). Boltanksi suggests a grander scale of engagement than what I have outlined, but his perspective helps show how sponsors are involved, willingly or not, in global systems of oppression and are thus responsible for the events that produce refugees and other forms of human suffering. An emphasis on "distance" is important because even though we are far away from these events, we participate in them. And, as in the case of my story about meeting the Lost Boys of Sudan, sometimes we come face-to-face with people who have experienced such events and processes first-hand.

The relationship I see between sponsor and sponsored, or *sponsor* and *emissary*, is one of culpability. Rhetorics of "uplift" along with the other standardized discourses that inform our assumptions about African refugee students work diligently to dehistoricize, depoliticize, and *distance* the sponsor from the sponsored. Feelings of guilt, pity, sympathy, as well as apathy and suspicion are impulses which keep the refugee subject distinctly separate from the sponsor. Jacob, who knew that having only one book among ten students required him to rely on memorization, provides a powerful example of how rhetorics of uplift shape a sponsor's interaction with refugee students and writers. If all refugees are taken seriously and their previous learning strategies valued, then sponsors can work with *emissaries* rather than people that they feel need to be fundamentally transformed in some way.

The fact that the stories of the Lost Boys of Sudan are so widely read and hold such power over sponsors makes me wonder about the many reasons these stories appeal to readers. As I discuss above, our interests in stories like these are often rife with logics of colonialism, racism, sexism, and cultural and linguistic superiority. I see composition teacher-scholars benefiting from these observations in several immediate ways. First, the strategies and experiences that refugee students bring to each learning occasion need to be valued in their own right. Rather than regarding the refugee camp as producing a deficiency that needs to be overcome, sponsors should see the value of that experience by paying attention to the specific strategies refugee students use in those contexts. Such strategies can help us reject discourses of "deficiency." Additionally, we can look at instances in which refugees challenge dominant representations of refugee identity. As we start to read in these ways, we gain opportunities to be more reflective about the place of U.S. college composition in the global, geopolitical landscape and to reflect on our impulse to "uplift" the Other. As we examine the perceived borders between the camp and the classroom, we can develop a more global and ethical perspective on literacy sponsorship. Then, we can rework our approaches to the subjects of citizenship, globalization, and multiculturalism as they are utilized in our composition courses as well as in literacy research more broadly.

In my work with Dominic, we can observe a success story of sorts. He graduated from college, got a job, got married, but has not returned to South Sudan. From him, I learned about refugee experience. I became a more self-aware teacher, and I am able to share that knowledge to my colleagues. However, in such success stories lie the dormant rhetorics of state power, the expectations placed upon Dominic, the limited mobility that

might prevent his return to Sudan. While I am proud of how hard we worked and how fortunate I am to have played even a small role in his new life, I also want to keep reminding myself that the idea of a "new life" for refugees can be bittersweet.

CHAPTER FOUR: "EMISSARIES OF LITERACY: FIELDWORK INTERVIEWS AND FINDINGS"

Introduction: Refugee Communities and Composition

The subject of refugee experience poses compelling problematics for the study of literacy sponsorship. More specifically, community literacy projects that support language acquisition, cultural orientation, and cross-cultural communication are some of the most important sites of inquiry for understanding literacy sponsorship in global contexts. Refugees, children and adults, arrive in the U.S. and are compelled to acquire English as quickly as possible while also having to navigate the complicated bureaucratic trappings of finding a job, making doctors' appointments, and enrolling in school. While most refugee populations share these needs, even within the same city, refugees cannot be considered one homogeneous group. Community literacy research, particularly of the ethnographic variety, teaches us that very little can be generalized or concluded about literacy practice or literacy acquisition from one community to another. This observation cannot be overstated when it comes to the implications of literacy sponsorship for refugee communities in the U.S.

For example, the city of Milwaukee serves as the new home for several hundred refugee families from such diverse nations in Africa as Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Ghana, the Congo, and South Africa. Many come to the U.S. as children and are enrolled in school. Some might have gone to school in a refugee camp, some may have gone to grade school in their home town or city, or, as one aid worker told me, some have come to the U.S. with no exposure to any kind of "consistent formal education." Regardless, refugees

resettled from the African continent have widely diverse educational histories that cannot be generalized.

My fieldwork site, the Pan-African Community Association (PACA), was established in 1998 "to address the emerging issues of African immigrants and refugees in the Milwaukee metro area" ("About Us"), particularly their resettlement in the U.S. While Milwaukee is home to several thousand refugees, many of them Hmong, PACA specializes in working with individuals and families from African nations. PACA's mission is to bring "together all people of African descent to preserve and enrich African cultural values through education, empowerment, and dialogue; serving the needs of the greater Milwaukee community" ("About Us"). PACA communicates values such as "dignity," "diversity," and "service," and focuses on four objectives: "advocacy," "cultural preservation/promotion," "education," and "services" ("About Us"). According to the Executive Director, Fessahaye Mebrahtu,

> [PACA] builds bridges across communities and cultures and serves African and other immigrants and refugees. The focus of helping refugees and immigrants make a smooth transition adjusting to their new environment needs sensitivity and cultural competence. PACA staff is a microcosm of the community comprising of at least six different nationalities. Each staff member speaks at least two languages. (*The Pan African*)

Pan-Africanism, as D. Zizwe Poe defines it, is a position that "addresses a set of ideas and actions that seek to establish an optimal zone for macro-African agency" (11). PACA, in its concern for helping African immigrants and refugees of several nationalities, appears to emphasize an "Afrocentric" approach to community work, focusing on "the empowerment of Africans" (1).

Literacy sponsors, in an effort to have greater contextual awareness, can learn

from refugee students who continually complicate, expose, resist, and rework the role of English literacy in their lives, an attitude I call a "literacy of refugeeness." This chapter promotes a literacy of the geopolitical contexts from which refugees are resettled and the various state and political powers that shape their identities. Through the suffering of displacement and the struggles of seeking asylum, refugees construct a collective understanding of refugee identity, or as Malkki explains, a "social imagination of refugeeness" (380). Literacy sponsors should seek to understand the contexts through which refugees appropriate the label and self-identify as asylum seekers. The complex processes refugees navigate compel them to learn sophisticated strategies of self-reflection. As composition teacher scholars, we can both learn form and contribute to the kinds of self-reflection refugees practice, especially in forms of reading and writing in the contexts of education.

Many of the ways refugees appropriate the terms *refugee* and *Africa* are through discourses of deficiency in regards to literacy, education, and development. In this chapter, I use fieldwork to show how aid workers, tutors, and refugee students at PACA interacted with, were constrained by, and spoke back to dominant discursive constructions about refugee resettlement. My participants, especially the refugee students, expressed complex relations with English literacy acquisition. For example, the role English played in their lives was simultaneously hegemonic and empowering. That is, students explained how they were compelled to learn English in different situations in order to avoid being further marginalized. Not knowing English, in fact, marked them as refugees, and they felt doubly marginalized because of the language and their refugee status. However, while discourses of power construct the educational histories of

refugees as deficient, the refugee students I interviewed learned English and pursued

American education while they simultaneously continued to develop literacy strategies in

other languages.

Similarly, the aid workers and tutors I interviewed were not wholly bound by

discourses of power. Instead, they both reproduced and disrupted their assumptions about

refugees in competing and contradictory ways. For instance, tutors often expressed

cultural sensitivity toward the refugee students, acknowledging that they could not

generalize about Africa or the students in any accurate way. Yet, when the topic of

education or literacy came up, they described Africa as homogenously underdeveloped

and lacking infrastructure. Tutors, students, and aid workers all had ambiguous

relationships with the discourses of power that shaped literacy sponsorship in these

contexts.

One of the programs in which PACA's values and objectives are practiced is the

After School Program for African Immigrants and Refugees (ASPAIR). This after-

school, education support program enlists community volunteers as well as work-study

and service-learning students from the local colleges and universities to tutor refugee and

immigrant students. The mission of ASPAIR is described in the brochure they use to

advertise their program:

> The After School Program for African Immigrants and Refugees
> (ASPAIR) seeks to provide academic support for African immigrant and
> refugee children and to help them refine their social skills while providing
> them with guidance in social integration without compromising their own
> values. ("ASPAIR Brochure")

Helping students develop social skills is a primary goal of ASPAIR. Education is

regarded as a means for helping students integrate into American culture without losing

their own cultural values. According to PACA,

> ASPAIR participants are provided with tutoring on a daily basis during [the] school year. They are helped with their homework, taught various study skills, and given a chance to improve their English. These tools help them to integrate [into] the American society and achieve success in their endeavors. ("ASPAIR Brochure")

The students I interviewed often expressed how they could not understand what teachers were asking of them or what their peers were saying to or about them, and needed to learn English just to survive a school day. Having students work with English-speaking tutors helps ASPAIR achieve both the academic goals and the cultural integration that students need in order to feel confident in their transition to American life. Sometimes an emphasis on their transition can overshadow the valuable experiences students bring to their learning occasions, so ASPAIR is careful to communicate a balance between adjusting to American expectations and preserving cultural identity to both tutors and students as they work with each other.

Students who made use of ASPAIR ranged from first grade through high school, so tutors needed to be flexible and patient with the kinds of schoolwork they would encounter. This was somewhat challenging for me as I have only been trained to work on college-level writing, wherein tutor and writer discuss rhetorical strategies. I was ill-prepared to help elementary and high school students with math and grammar exercises. Like many refugee community organizations, ASPAIR does not have the resources to organize the kinds of tutor-training sessions that they feel they need. According to the aid workers I interviewed, the primary concern for tutor-training was to ensure tutors expressed cultural sensitivity toward the students that came to them for help. I will go more into the specific observations made by my research participants in a later section of

this chapter, but here, I would like to give a telling, if brief, example of the kinds of issues and concerns, both political and pragmatic, that intersect in this site of literacy sponsorship.

When I first started volunteering at ASPAIR, I worked with several refugee students from Somalia who were completing their sophomore year in high school. These particular students had come to the U.S. with little exposure to formal education, but were placed according to their age, which made it difficult for them to catch up on subjects and learn English at the same time. One afternoon, I was helping a student with discussion questions for his reading assignment. This student liked to tell stories, dance, and make jokes, once telling me that he had danced with Michael Jackson: "You know the Thriller video?" he asked me, "That was me in the back!" After working for some time, he became frustrated. Then, he pushed his chair back, threw up his hands, and exclaimed, "We are from Africa! We do not write!" He seemed to be playing off of representations in the news and popular media of Africa as being made up of only oral cultures. He reminded me of tutor training materials (not at PACA) I have read that described African refugees as "preliterate". But, he knew that I knew this was not true. He also knew that it was white, English-speaking, native-born educators in the U.S. like me who projected these kinds of assumptions upon him. After all, as the stories of refugees show, we are the kind of people who are most likely to sponsor a refugee.

I see this as a moment of rhetorical savvy for him and a moment of critical reflection for me as he suddenly made me aware that he knew what people thought of him and was willing to express it with a sophisticated sense of irony. These were assumptions that he was confronted with everyday. Even though he struggled with

English literacy—he did not have as much experience with English as the Lost Boys of Sudan, for example, before resettling in the U.S.—he demonstrated an awareness of the assumptions literacy sponsors make of refugees from Africa, that he does not write, that he is "just another" black body who could have been in a Michael Jackson video, or that he can stand in as a representative of all of Africa, of oral culture, or of *the* refugee experience.

The many implications for English literacy in global contexts and the many imbalances of power within literacy sponsorship intersect in these two, short statements: "We are from Africa" and "We do not write." When I first took on the project of interviewing the different people at ASPAIR and writing about my own experience as a literacy sponsor to refugees, I felt compelled to insist that I was not merely designing a guideline of "best practices" for working with refugee students. My tutoring experience showed me that prescriptive methods for working with students and writers limited my flexibility when working with refugees. Because I am a Ph.D. student and teacher at the local university, resettlement agencies and aid workers have sometimes asked me for my "expert" opinion or asked for best practices that I might suggest for helping volunteer tutors and teachers work with refugee students. As I have talked with students, tutors, and aid workers, though, I have been reminded that it is not so much the method we use to work with the student but the attitude with which we approach these literacy-learning contexts that is the most beneficial to refugee communities.

The idea of thinking of refugee students and writers as *emissaries* goes beyond the question of how to help refugee students and suggests an alternative viewpoint from which to approach literacy sponsorship in refugee communities. Those of us who use our

research and teaching to do literacy work in local communities have good intentions for

wanting to help people like the refugees in this chapter, but often these intentions can be

burdened by discourses of power that put us in the position of "uplifting" the seemingly

"downtrodden." Literacy sponsorship in refugee communities is laden with discourses of

an American "exceptionalism" that render the refugee subject a passive object of aid. The

desire for best practices can often reproduce these discourses of power. Instead of

identifying best practices for working with refugee students or cataloguing the literacy

practices used by refugees, I take a cue from Morris Young, who examines the

"connection between literacy, race, and citizenship" by looking at the "function of

literacy" in people's lives (149). In this fieldwork analysis, I avoid prescriptive, top-

down, unilateral approaches to working with refugee communities in favor of examining

the function of literacy in the lives of people who have complicated relationships with the

English language, with citizenship, and with geographic mobility. I do so in order to

understand the power dynamics present in acts of sponsorship.

This chapter incorporates the voices of my research participants, the students,

tutors, and aid workers I interviewed. I hope to gain a fuller understanding of the

discourses and structures of power that govern literacy sponsorship in pan-African

refugee communities. My findings are organized according to two themes, the first of

which has to do with "contextual awareness" and how discourses about culture, economic

development, and participants' understandings of context influenced the way they talked

about their work. This involves the political implications of using "Africa" as an identity

marker as well as the discourses of power involved in literacy sponsorship. All research

participants discussed the contexts of Africa to some extent, though they did so from

dramatically different perspectives. This theme complements the "critical awareness" demonstrated by refugee writers in Chapter Three, but here, tutors and aid workers discuss their own awareness of the people that they sponsor and the contexts in which this sponsorship takes place.

The second theme pertains to the ways refugee students and writers "speak back" (Powell 302) or "talk back" (see hooks and also Canagarajah) to the discourses of power that inform literacy sponsorship. By paying close attention to the stories my participants told, especially the refugee students at PACA I interviewed, I find that the ways they chose to speak back have implications for how dominant paradigms of literacy sponsorship, especially those that are informed by logics of aid, can be reimagined for more critical and pedagogical purposes. In this way, refugee students and writers can be thought of as "emissaries of literacy," representatives or sponsors of their own literacy learning.

Sponsor Perspectives: Contextual Awareness

The discourses of power intersecting in sites of literacy sponsorship limit the contextual awareness possible in a given occasion. Sponsors who see themselves as working against marginalization will often and unknowingly reproduce dominant discourses about refugees and Africa. Because they do so unintentionally, sponsors both challenge and reproduce discourses of power in contradictory ways. From my observations, my participants were most susceptible to making stereotypical generalizations of Africa and refugee identity when I asked them about education. That is, when I asked them directly about what they knew of Africa or refugees before

working at ASPAIR, they seemed more careful to avoid misrepresenting the contexts of

the students' refugee experience. However, when I asked them about education, sponsors

tended to see Africa and refugee identity in reduced terms.

Discourses of power were most prevalent in the statements of tutors regarding

their work in the after-school program. "Contextual awareness" can be described as an

attention to the contexts from which the refugee students are resettled, in this case, the

pejorative connotations attached to the term "Africa," rendered as monolithic, an entire

continent full of oral cultures, preliterate, an imagined place represented in the media as

violent, Third World, underdeveloped, and malnourished, and a place needing to be

saved. Refugee students, like the one who told me, "We are from Africa! We do not

write!" demonstrated what I would call a "critical awareness" of the assumptions made of

them, critical because they both appropriated and spoke back to discourses of power.

American, English-speaking literacy sponsors, on the other hand, had a wide range of

discourses to unlearn.

Tutors reproduced discourses of power about the idea of Africa, but did so in

varying ways. For example, some tutors made stereotypical remarks, even when I did not

directly ask them to comment on the contexts of refugee experience or Africa. One tutor

responded to my question about why she chose PACA for her work-study placement

saying that she wanted a "challenge":

> *What made you choose this organization as a place to fulfill your service-learning requirements? Or Work Study?*

> I wanted a challenge and something that would be inspirational to me because some of these kids come from backgrounds that you wouldn't believe. When they were in Africa, they were almost killed with bow and arrows and stuff like that.

While I find such statements to be frustrating because they recall images of "savagery," I interpret them as evidence of American exceptionalism rather than as an isolated instance of stereotyping. In that sense, I do not want to blame the tutor, but should instead look at the larger contexts that produced such discourses of power. While tutors might reproduce dominant discourse, they also complicated or contradicted their own statements. When I asked the same tutor directly about what her previous knowledge of Africa had been before working for PACA, she told me how she understood the kinds of representations made of Africa in the media:

> *What were your impressions of Africa before you started working here?*
>
> A lot of the countries, I knew nothing about. I think people get the misperception that Africa is a Third World country, they don't have enough food, you know, they get caught up in the television and media, and you know how the media makes everything look bad. So, I just feel like that was the kind of opinion I had.

This tutor acknowledged that many people, including herself, come to think of Africa as a "Third World country." This can come from a lack of geographical, or more accurately, geopolitical literacy that understands only a one-dimensional image of Africa. As literacy sponsors, tutors had complicated attitudes toward the places from which the refugee students were resettled. Sometimes, assumptions of Africa as a violent, homogenous, or unenlightened place were expressed openly, but sometimes more subtly, and I think that these subtle expressions about Africa merit more attention because they were most often made in relation to economic development.

For instance, another tutor told me she had several years of experience working with refugees, traveling abroad, had taught school in Ghana, and was pursuing a graduate degree in something related to global studies. When she told me she taught in Ghana, I

asked her what it was like. She responded,

> It was my first experience and the biggest thing was the structure of the school system, or the lack of structure, from what I'm used to with the education system here in the states…I was just put in front of a classroom of 40 students, high schoolers, so it was very difficult, but that's one of the biggest differences about learning here and learning in a lot of developing countries that maybe a lot of refugees come from.

When I asked the tutor about her previous knowledge of Africa or the specific countries the students were from, she replied,

> It's so hard because I think people generalize when they just say Africa, but there are so many different cultures within Africa. There's Western Africa, French West Africa, and I would like to say that I know and understand the communities that these refugees come from, but the truth is that I don't. I'm sure it was very different from where I was, but there are similarities, like the lack of infrastructure that you would find in other developing countries, but it's hard for me to comment on specific cultural things because they are so different.

This tutor made a distinction between "development" and "culture." Economic development was something that is generalized across Africa, while culture was something distinct to different regions, nations, cities, etc. The statements of these tutors are evidence of how discourses of power and contextual awareness intersect in contradictory ways. Tutors expressed an awareness of the common depictions of Africa and how Africa is represented in the media as homogenous despite a wide diversity of countries and cultures.

As illustrated in these examples, when participants discussed culture or were directly asked to explain their previous knowledge of refugees and Africa, they used a more open, multicultural discourse that respected the differences and subtleties among Africa's many countries and identities. When I asked about tutoring, or when the aid workers and tutors brought up the idea of Africa on their own, or when literacy and

education were addressed apart from culture, discourse collapsed into a monolithic understanding of economic development. In each case, "Third World" and "developing" were symbolic of the perceived differences between education in the U.S. and Africa. These perceived differences constituted a complex web linking economic development, education, geography, race, and culture. Graff observes how as early as the Industrial Revolution, strong links were made between economic development and literacy. Even though, as Graff claims, "Industry, skills, and wealth could be obtained by the individual with no schooling; education, nevertheless, was viewed as fundamental to the development and maintenance of the economic system, as it was to the social order" (*The Literacy Myth* 200). Such beliefs have implications for the ideologies of advanced capitalism and global economic development: "On a collective scale," Graff notes, "literacy is thought to be a necessary precondition of modernization" (*Literacy Myths* 42). Graff's summaries of these pervasive beliefs, especially in an English-speaking First World, provide insight into why literacy sponsors might draw distinctions between education in the U.S. and education in "developing" regions.

As sponsors, our *global* perspectives are informed by discourses of American exceptionalism rooted in historical, economic paradigms. Ferguson's observation of the relationship between advanced capitalism and democracy shows how such discourses of power have been "exported" by the U.S. and Great Britain under the label of "civil society" (91). In the First World, the relationship between literacy and capitalism was championed by neoliberal policy-makers of the early 1980s under the guise of promoting free trade and fighting against communism. And, in the Third World, literacy and capitalism was promoted as tool to help liberate states from dictatorship and despotism

(91). Literacy sponsors, from individuals to organizations, have come to make strong connections between education and economic development that have been "universalized" as a discourse of power "that no reasonable person can argue against" (91). The perceived linkages between literacy, education, economic development, and democracy are not always wholly inaccurate nor are they universal, but they are unreflectively reproduced in our descriptions of literacy sponsorship.

But, the links observed by Graff and Ferguson do not explain why tutors would address cultural context in a different way than economic development and education. When tutors were asked directly about culture and Africa, they relied on liberal rhetorics of multiculturalism, and in this way, the issue of culture was a rhetorical one. Tutors were carefully considering their audience. Rhetorics of multiculturalism prepare us to discuss cultural difference from a liberal-centric point of view, or can be an expression of "political correctness" and "liberal guilt" (M. Young 185). These rhetorics do not provide a critical language for understanding the links between culture, difference, and economic development on a global scale. Cultural explanations such as imagining Africa as "one culture," or as illiterate, pre-literate, oral, and underdeveloped, are, at best, contradictory.

I see another contradiction in the perceived links between literacy and economic development. When education is the subject, African refugees represent an overcoming of obstacles in what appears to be a narrative of hope. When economics is the subject, dependence upon aid positions refugees as "burdens on the system." Refugee students from Africa bear the burden of being cast in contradistinction to American students. For example, one tutor explained how she chose to work in the after-school program:

> Tutoring American kids is great, but at the same time I wanted a challenge and something that would be inspirational to me.

Similarly, one aid worker, John, mentioned, "I'm coming from working with American kids who behave a little bit differently." Comparing refugee students to American students affects the different groups in asymmetrical ways. As John continued, he explained the successes he saw in the work of the after-school program:

> One interesting thing is that we hear of these success stories of African immigrants and refugees coming here and once they get past the challenge of the English language, they become high achieving students. I just see a discipline and a respect for education, and their success to me is the result of their discipline at home, their own interests and respect for learning and the quality of ESL teaching.

While these comparisons are benign and, in fact, celebrate the achievements of the refugee and immigrant students, like the celebrations of Lost Boys of Sudan discussed in Chapter Three, such characterizations risk reproducing "model minority" ideology. In these examples, I am not so concerned with depictions of refugee students, but of the subtle comparisons to "American students." In Milwaukee, many of the after-school programs serve students of color, predominantly African-American students from the city's public school system. Kevin Gaines explains how new Africans can sometimes be depicted as ideal, hardworking immigrants who are set in opposition to supposedly "underachieving" African-Americans (16), a dichotomy reinforcing the model minority stereotype. These comparisons confirm the "pick yourself up by your bootstraps" master narrative that scaffolds the American Dream.

Comparisons between refugees and American students include both academics and behavior. Throughout my experience working in the after-school program, going to conferences, and sharing my research with other teachers, I have often heard the sentiment that it is discouraging to see fighting, bullying, and teasing between African-

American students and new African immigrant and refugee students. People explain to me how because both groups share a connection to Africa, there should be some sort of solidarity between them. One teacher told me how she thought that there should be a curricular initiative to teach students of color more about Africa so that these connections could be fostered in healthier ways.

I tentatively agree with this idea of including education about the African continent, but this curriculum should not only be geared toward students. Instead, teacher professional development should include the political and historical contexts of "Africa" as a category of identification. As teachers, we should learn more about the complex histories of African immigration as well as the complicated identities implied by the label of "Africa." Africa is a large, diverse continent, but still holds power in the minds of sponsors in the U.S. as a monolithic, homogeneous idea. One common misrepresentation of Africa is that it is often referred to as a "country." Of course, sponsors misspeak (as the tutor above misspoke), and as I have indicated, my college writing students often make this mistake, but this kind of misrepresentation happens too often with Africa. The diversity of Africa is vast and cannot be adequately examined in any holistic sense, yet we still use the term *Africa* to describe its people, traditions, cultures, and histories. Sponsors can learn from Afrocentric approaches and pan-African ideologies how not to impose white assumptions, no matter how well intentioned, upon people of color. Prescriptive approaches to learning place the onus upon students to change, and teaching practice is thought of in unilateral terms, used by the teacher to change the student. What is evident is that as teachers, and literacy sponsors more generally, we need to learn more about the global and local contexts in which our students live.

Acts of cross-cultural comparison expose dominant assumptions. I gave a paper at a refugee studies conference on the Lost Boys of Sudan. One audience member brought up the use of child soldiers in reference to some of the stories the Lost Boys told. The audience member compared the use of child soldiers between Vietnam and South Sudan (my other colleagues on the panel focused on Hmong refugee populations), saying something to the effect: "the use of child soldiers in Africa is, of course, from my understanding, much more 'horrific' than in other places." This comparison struck me as odd. How do we draw distinctions between "horror" in one place compared to "horror" in another? Comparisons like this are more about interpretation than about any real material or experiential difference between the two examples. That is, perhaps popular media has communicated this difference, or perhaps the rhetoric used in the media implies that "Africa," the place in which the statement "the horror" was first uttered, is a touchstone for global atrocity. To make a claim that one context is worse than another says more about the assumptions of educators who have the privilege of making such interpretations than it does about the refugee students under discussion.

When tutors demonstrated awareness of the contexts of Africa and the places from which the refugee students were resettled, they cited sources outside popular media for their knowledge. Sometimes these were cultural references or sometimes personal experience. In either case, these specific resources typically disrupted the discourses of power that depict Africa in monolithic terms, but again, what was disruptive to colonial understandings of refugee identity typically focused on what my participants described as "culture." To learn more about what my research participants knew about the contexts of refugee resettlement, I asked tutors how they felt they might have been able to relate to

the refugee students. One tutor said she could relate to the students through personal

experience. While not a refugee story, she said her mother was born in Jamaica, which

made her feel like she was "different" when they moved to Wisconsin:

> *How do you see yourself relating or not relating to the students you work*
> *with?*
>
> I moved here when I was 11 from Florida, which was a pretty big
> change…so I've been raised with certain customs that aren't usual in the
> U.S.

This tutor also self-identified as a person of color and said,

> I am black, so it matters to me that people from Africa get adjusted to
> American life and have every opportunity to succeed.

Because the tutor was talking about the issues of opportunity and success and implying

that racism is something people struggle with in the U.S., her use of "Africa" as a

categorical descriptor did not raise the same kinds of questions I have had regarding other

sponsors' uses of the term. I am guilty of using "Africa" in similar ways. Instead, I see

her use as expressing a sense of solidarity, of shared struggle against U.S. racism that

helped her relate to the students.

Another tutor responded to my question of how she related to students through

being an outsider, citing that she was adopted:

> there was a point in time when I wasn't accepted and everyone knew.
> Even if people didn't know, I felt like they knew because I didn't fit in
> socially. I had to find myself socially because I was a real introvert when
> it came to everything. I didn't want to talk to people. I didn't want to look
> people in the eye. I just feel like I relate to them by just being a little
> different and not feeling like I fit in, but at the same time I feel like I don't
> relate to them in the sense that since I was born, I've gotten everything I
> wanted. This whole situation with the kids, it's really been a humbling
> experience just because I can admit I'm very spoiled. My parents give me
> everything that I could possibly ask for. It's just different with them. You
> can tell they appreciate every little thing.

Both tutors imply that they related to refugee students through feelings of difference, of not belonging. Tutors acknowledged that this was a superficial connection, but it was the most immediate connection they felt.

Discourses of power about "Africa"—derived from colonial attitudes toward Africa—limit the rhetorical mobility of literacy sponsors as they try to describe their work with refugee students. Sponsors' available means for demonstrating contextual awareness are restricted to English-centric understandings of the world. For example, when I asked John—an English-speaking, white man—about his previous knowledge of Africa and how he related to the students, he acknowledged the role of the media and popular journalism and how he heard many people ask refugee students if they "speak African" or refer casually to "African culture." What helped him learn more about Africa, he said, was his interest in music:

> My awareness of Africa was through music and that's where I began to get more of an understanding of where things were in Africa because I would get a compilation from Nigeria, then from Togo, then one from Ethiopia, and that started opening up the continent a little bit more to where I started to see East African, West African, South African compilations of music. So, for me, it was through music at first, and really the only places I knew of to a certain extent were the countries I had music compilations from.

When John explained how his idea of Africa "started opening up," it opened up in a distinctly cultural way. In one way, music from different regions in the continent disrupted some of the stereotypical representations of Africa that my participants observed in the mainstream media. But, this is a complicated example to analyze in relation to the cultural and contextual awareness of literacy sponsors. Cultural forms and practices expressed through music allowed John to have a more complex and global perspective of the African landscape, significantly more diverse and nuanced than

depictions of Africa in the mainstream media. Sponsors who pursue what could be labeled as a kind of cultural literacy practice, tend to have good intentions. At the same time, the "opening up" of the African continent is a discourse composed from the colonialist perspective, a discourse that is impossible to escape. While we can read John's statement as disrupting "standardized forms" of the African image (recall Malkki's use of this phrase), this cultural literacy practice does not completely escape colonialist ideologies, something literacy sponsors, particularly composition teacher-scholars who study the politics of language, should continue to interrogate.

In relation to John's statements, it is not necessarily the sponsor, but the discourses shaping a sponsor's descriptions that demand more attention. Sponsors can gain a more specific language for describing the work they do if they learn to "stand under" the dominant but naturalized discourses of literacy sponsorship. As Ratcliffe explains, "consciously standing under discourses that surround us and others" (28). Though it is difficult to conclude how my participants might have been listening rhetorically to the discourses of our conversations, the different questions I asked seemed to evoke varying degrees of conscious understanding. For example, when I asked participants directly about working with students from African nations, they first identified depictions on television, like "how the media makes everything look bad" as one tutor noted. Or, as John observed, a lot of "people ask refugee students" if they "speak African."

Calling attention to the term "Africa," on my part, seemed to trigger these responses. I cannot conclude to what extent these responses were genuine attempts to understand these discourses of power or if, as well-intentioned community literacy

sponsors, this was another set of discourses literacy sponsors have access to when they are trying to describe their work in refugee communities. What is revealing is how when asked about education and tutoring practices more broadly, complex views of Africa collapsed and the category regained its markers of "lack"—lack of infrastructure, economic development, and educational standards. Perhaps this tendency was symptomatic of what Butler describes as a failure "to situate culture in terms of a *systematic* understanding of social and economic modes of production" (265). While Butler observes this failure in the discourse of leftist academics, its pervasiveness across multiple contexts is implied. The problematic of culture, as my participants used the term, is that it was often addressed in isolation from the reality that cultures intermingle and are related to economic systems of power.

Rhetorics of multiculturalism and cultural sensitivity, no matter how seemingly benign or well-intentioned, have been produced out of the historical contexts of colonialism. For example, postcolonial writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o observe, "colonialism finds that economic and political control are incomplete without cultural and hence ideological control" (93). Thiong'o finds direct correlations between culture and ideology, and dominance cannot be maintained without incorporating economics, politics, *and* culture. These rhetorics, thus, limit our vocabulary for describing acts of literacy sponsorship that take place in sites where American sponsors and African refugees come into contact.

The limited discourses available in the contexts of literacy sponsorship might be summed up in contemporary terms as having "neoliberal" tendencies, or what Thiong'o describes as "that process in which a country is nominally independent but its economy is

still in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Nothing, in substance, has changed" (95).

As literacy sponsors, we are embedded within deeply rooted colonial discourses of

economic development. As Thiong'o continues, "During the neocolonial stage of

imperialism, education and culture play an even more important role as instruments of

domination and oppression" (96-97). My intent is not to critique the tutors who

graciously gave me their time, but to examine how literacy sponsors are entrenched

within discourses that shape their interactions with refugees resettled from the African

continent. From what my participants referred to as "culture" to the international spread

of English language education, we risk the continued circulation of discourses that

position English as dominant and others as subordinate. When I speak of contextual

awareness, I mean to have literacy sponsors think about the local contexts of teaching and

tutoring refugee students as well as the global, historical implications of U.S. dominance.

Education has been a tool of oppression, and the U.S. continually engages in efforts to

export American ways of learning to places like refugee camps.

Assumptions circulated about the educational standards of refugee camps in

Africa rely on a deficit model that describes students as ancient, stone age, backward, and

lost, but as I argue in Chapter Three, these depictions are more often about the

naturalized beliefs of sponsors than about the actual educational experiences of refugee

students. For instance, when David Chanoff describes the Lost Boys of Sudan as "a

historically unique group of young Africans, their minds formed and conditioned by the

age-old patterns of life on the Upper Nile savanna, [who] are transforming themselves

and being transformed in 21st-century America" (36), he appropriates their story for his

own agenda: to celebrate how American brands of education transformed the minds of

these students. In contrast, Chanoff asserts, "Educators in Africa generally tend to emphasize memorization rather than critical thinking" (43). Of course, when I highlight the actual words of the student Chanoff interviewed, who said he was compelled to rely on memorization because he and his peers had to share one textbook, I observe how deficits in material conditions influence education far more than anything branded distinctly "African." This raises questions not only for what education in refugee camps actually looks like, but what might count as "education." What counts in the minds of sponsors like Chanoff are educational practices like "memorization" that can be contrasted easily with "American ways of learning," and these only count so far as they can be used to bolster the unidirectional attitude of literacy sponsors. The actual learning strategies of students are ignored in service of an agenda that values the alleged deficiencies of refugees, and these are valued only as evidence of a refugee student's potential to be transformed by American education.

I interviewed an aid worker I will call "Adam" who self-identified as a refugee and had taught English and other subjects in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, the same camp where the Lost Boys of Sudan attended classes for ten years. While he cited large class sizes—sometimes 40, 60, even 70 students in one class—as one of the factors influencing his teaching methods, he spent most of his time discussing what it felt like to try and read books in the hot, dry conditions of the camp:

> With the weather conditions, it's hard to read in the camp. I was doing it, forcing myself (laughs) because I grew up in a cold place. And there was a student who came to do research, asking if weather conditions limit your thinking capacity, and it's true. You had to look for someplace in the shade…That part of the country [Kenya] is a semi-dessert. It's sandy.

As with the example of Jacob in Chapter Three, Adam also described how students had to

share books:

> There is a shortage of resources. They have the best texts in Nairobi, but they use the cheap ones that are published by private publishers in the camp.

He told me how resources affected his teaching in other classes besides English. For instance, he taught science classes, explaining,

> if you want to talk about the density of air, you bring a simple soda bottle. Then you heat the bottle…we use the available materials.

Sponsors seem to have a double standard when discussing education in transnational contexts. The influence of material conditions on teaching methods is something not addressed by literacy sponsors like Chanoff, but according to Adam, are the driving force behind teaching in a refugee camp. Paternalistic attitudes toward refugees and Africa are betrayed by this omission. For instance, public school teachers in the U.S. also confront a lack of resources and large classroom sizes. In the U.S., this is regarded as a reality of public education, a result of economic pressures. In "Africa," this is just "African" culture. What often dictates teaching style is not culture but is instead material realities. The tutor who taught in Ghana said that she had 40 students in her class, but Milwaukee Public School teachers also face similarly high class sizes. Instead of explaining this away as a cultural "problem," as Chanoff does, and contrasting it with "American ways of learning," sponsors should understand that what dictates teaching style is not "culture" but is instead material realities.

Adam, as well as the refugee students I interviewed, never explained their educational backgrounds or English language-learning experiences in terms of African culture or standards. Such observations are the constructions of Western, ethnocentric understandings of education. Narayan explains how problems that occur within the

national boundaries of places labeled "Third World" are too easily explained away (by

Westerners) as cultural "problems" unrelated to geopolitical systems of material

oppression. Narayan calls this a "cultural explanation" (105), which limits "the project of

'understanding Other cultures'" (104). Narayan argues that such a "project" must take

into account larger national contexts as well as "historical and political knowledge"

(103). When English literacy and general education practices are the topic, some sponsors

rely upon cultural explanations rather than material conditions or of even the refugees'

own accounts. Linking literacy practice so closely with misunderstandings about culture

produces what Street calls the "autonomous model of literacy," the "ideological purpose"

of which "is to justify and defend western educational practice" (35). According to

Thiong'o, such justifications are never benign, but instead continue the pursuit of a

neocolonial project on the African continent.

　　　In contrast to this deficit model of education that is blamed on culture rather than

on material realities were the attitudes of students and teachers told to me by Adam. He

explained how "there are so many dynamic students in the camp," and,

> The education standard is very good because in the camp, the students
> need to work hard and because of the low payment, teachers would work
> for their own satisfaction. I always did it for my own satisfaction. There
> were some students who would come and wake me up to go and teach
> because of their interest and their curiosity.

This kind of statement should be the place from which we start when we try to

understand literacy in global contexts. That is, what we see is a story very similar to

inspiring stories of education in the U.S.: teachers who are passionate about their work

despite poor working conditions and lack of resources and students who are excited about

learning, who come to class curious and committed, who are "dynamic" rather than

homogenously deficient. Stories like this show how an exploited, marginalized

population can speak back to discourses of power produced and circulated by American

and Western ideologies. Pan-African studies scholar John K. Marah observes how

"Implicitly or explicitly, westerners have come to believe that without them the rest of

mankind, especially the non-Europeans, will be in a sea of ignorance and barbarism …

This feeling of superiority is currently subdued, but explicit enough, and shows in how

the western man treats the rest of the world, and especially the African" (15). These are

discourses of power we cannot escape, not until, at the local level, we listen carefully to

the stories refugees and African immigrants tell of their literacy-learning experiences.

Much of this chapter thus far has been spent unpacking the contexts of "Africa"

and the places from which the refugee students were resettled, and this to me deserves the

most attention. But, another site of inquiry would be the local site of resettlement, the

surrounding communities in Milwaukee. One of the questions I asked aid workers was

about the kinds of resources they relied on or felt they needed to serve refugee students

better. The two aid workers I worked with the most, who had each been involved with

ASPAIR and went through the same training, cited "relationships" as the most valuable

resource they relied on and desired. For example, one aid worker, "Nikki" said,

> *What are the most helpful resources you have drawn from in order to meet*
> *the goals of this organization?*
>
> The most helpful resource would have to be the relationship with the
> colleges and universities. Without their help we may not be able to reach
> as many students as we do because it's a little bit more challenging to get
> tutors just from the community as opposed to contracting out from the
> universities where they provide service-learners who are supposed to learn
> from the children.

Even when I asked about resources they needed, Nikki told me how she wanted to forge

more relationships with the students' teachers because PACA wanted to know if the

students were making progress and what ASPAIR could do to help the students in more

specific ways:

> Something that we're working on would be better relationships with the teachers, the educators. I know it's kind of hard when you have many, many students in your class, you can't really worry about individual students, but it would be nice to have better relationships with educators to kind of track the progress and make sure that what we're doing is helping them in the classroom.

John added how he wanted to work on relationships with teachers as well:

> I had one person email me today, I'm going out to eat with a teacher and one of his students on Saturday, and I've connected with a couple of teachers at other schools. I want them to feel that they can come to me and let me know what I should work on with them or talk about any issues so I can communicate it back to their case managers. So, that's a big resource that I'm working on getting so that I can kind of be a bridge between teachers and parents when there's that language barrier.

When John first started at PACA, he relied on people in other community organizations

to help him understand what it might be like working with and tutoring refugee students.

He shadowed and observed other tutors and aid workers at different organizations in

Milwaukee to give him ideas to bring to PACA and ASPAIR.

Implied in the kind of cultural "competence" outlined in PACA's brochures is a

kind of "literacy of refugeeness." That is, in their efforts to promote greater contextual

awareness of refugees and the places from which they are resettled, they also foster a

more critical understanding of the discourses of power that inform the work they do.

While John said he learned more about Africa from listening to regional music, his

vocabulary for talking about refugees from Africa "opened up" when he formed

relationships with refugee students, their teachers, and their case workers. When the one

tutor expressed how her previous understanding of Africa came from the television, she

started to develop a literacy of refugeeness when she saw first-hand how the students she worked with sometimes felt like outsiders because of language and culture.

My participants' understanding of "culture," however, was divested from understandings of economic realities and legacies of colonialism. In other cases, culture was blamed for the deficiencies they perceived in literacy, education, and economic development. If economic realities were considered, it was only in service of making a comparison to seemingly superior "American" systems of learning. What we must consider if we are to make sense of these contradictions is how American and Western European brands of literacy and learning are exported and imposed on postcolonial subjects. This kind of global scale of inquiry could help literacy sponsors start to unlearn discourses of power that render the refugee student in monolithic terms and help us— well-intentioned literacy sponsors—listen more ethically and attentively to the stories refugees tell. A literacy of refugeeness would ask sponsors, including composition teacher-scholars, to not only do the work of understanding the contexts of refugee resettlement, but to provide opportunities for students and other literacy sponsors to engage with the idea of "refugeeness." In the next section, I discuss these more constructive, disruptive discourses by examining the voices and stories of the refugee students who used the after-school program.

Refugee Perspective: Language Awareness

I begin this section with several anecdotal observations of the ways students at ASPAIR identified, or not, as "African" in order to illustrate how they each had complex relationships with the term and appropriated it differently for a variety of purposes. One

afternoon, a third-grader from Eritrea was working with a white tutor from one of the local colleges. I did not hear the context of the conversation, but I suddenly heard the tutor say, "Well…you have American culture and African culture, so that's two things that you can write about." The student's eyes opened wide and rolled up to the ceiling. She balled a fist and took a big, exasperated breath. "I am from Eritrea, not Africa!" she exclaimed.

Then, one evening not long after, I was waiting for the bus home with several high-school-aged, young Somali Bantu men who frequently came to the after-school program. The topic of music came up, and one particularly charismatic high school junior who wore skinny jeans and Converse sneakers explained to me, "Michael, I like African music, African dancing!" He bounced up and down, bending at the knees, music echoing from the headphones around his neck.

The complexity of the responses from the two students showed that not only should Africa be seen as a diverse, heterogeneous place, but refugees and immigrants have complex relationships with the places from which they come. Some may choose to identify with their home nation, some with a more pan-African sentiment. The student who claimed Eritrea as her home, was not necessarily rejecting the term "Africa," in my opinion, but was instead rejecting the tutor's use of the term. The student, in this particular instance, wanted to write about Eritrean culture, arguing for a more local interpretation than the global, generalized view suggested by the tutor. Aid worker John also observed how some of the students identified as Eritrean:

> There doesn't seem to be much interest in American culture from the Eritrean and Ethiopian students. They seem to be really proud of where they are from, and if they're going online and looking at anything, they are looking at Eritrean movies and talking about Eritrea.

Of course, these observations did not necessarily indicate anything generalizable about students from Eritrea. Instead, it was one example in which discourses of power regarding the term "Africa" were made more complicated by the perspectives of African refugees and immigrants. Likewise, uses of the phrase "American culture" should also be made more complex. While I tend to think of "Americanization" when I invoke the term "American," meaning the global spread of the English language and the cultural imperialism that seems to follow, people identify as American in similarly complicated ways.

Literacy sponsors cannot assume that a given individual identifies with Africa in a given way. Instead stories and the voices of refugee students must be listened to carefully because people have different and contradictory relationships with the idea of Africa. The student above identified as Eritrean in that particular moment, though nothing conclusive should be observed of that particular rhetorical move. Additionally, Marah observes how "There are those who are in Africa … who do not have an emotional attachment to Africa or think of themselves as Africans" (22). According to Marah, pan-Africanism is "a psychological response to powerlessness and a desire to act upon the environment in which Africans found themselves, rather than be the ones being acted upon without any meaningful resistance" (80). While it is not my place to apply such sentiments to statements made by my research participants, I believe it is important to identify how literacy sponsors have an impulse to project their own understandings of context upon students rather than rhetorically listening to the diverse and multiple ways in which students might respond. Instead of taking what one student says and generalizing about all students who share her background, interpretations should focus on the "rhetorical

mobility" of the speaker within the given situation. The choice to identify or not identify with the term "Africa" is rhetorical, dependent on the available means of a given situation. In this case, the student was responding to a white, English-speaking literacy sponsor, but at another time, the same student might have made a different choice.

In contrast, some of the students invoked the term "Africa" more so than any other national identity marker. When the Somali Bantu students talked about themselves, they usually self-identified as Bantu or African more generally. Perhaps they identified with Africa instead of Somalia because the Somali Bantu "have been marked by centuries of discrimination and subjection" (Hough and Toner 186). But, this is the most tentative of observations based on anecdotal evidence from my time tutoring them for the past three years and a lack of available research sources. Generalizations cannot be made from one Bantu student to the next, but this kind of attention to the contexts of refugee resettlement helps complicate dominant understandings of identity and culture, especially in how they might inform the views of literacy sponsors. Perhaps, when the Somali Bantu students used the term Africa, like the student in the introduction to this chapter ("We are from Africa! We do not write!"), they appropriated and spoke back to the assumptions of white, college-educated, English-speaking sponsors like me. On several occasions, the Bantu students asked me if I liked bugs on my pizza or if I ate rats, stating that they did when they were in Africa. They asked me to give them the clothes I was wearing or give them thousands of dollars. They were obviously teasing me, and they did this daily with all the tutors in the after-school program, most of whom were white. They were very good at calling attention to the assumptions of white people.

Instances of refugees "speaking back," of appropriating discourses of power can

be said to be evidence of what Mary Louise Pratt defines as the "literate arts of the contact zone": "Autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, vernacular expression—these are some of the literate arts of the contact zone" that "express the effects of long-term contact and intractable, unequal conflict" (37). Pratt describes the subversive and subtle ways in which those who are *Othered* can speak back to dominant representations of themselves. One student I interviewed, Mohammad, told me that he knew eight languages, that he was proud of his home languages and continued to use them with his peers, not only to preserve them in his memory, but to ensure that he and his peers had some space apart from those who did not identify with them. Mohammad, for example, told me how he used the Bantu language Mai-Mai. While he said that it was "two different languages," he seemed to imply that Mai-Mai had several varieties and not everyone who knew one variety of Mai-Mai could understand other varieties:

> *How many languages would you say that you know? Do remember how you learned them? What was hard about learning them? What was easy?*
>
> My language is two different languages. One is the hard way and one is the easy way. I know the hard way and the easy way, which means if you're not Bantu, I can just speak the hard way and you would not understand what I'm saying. Both of them are the same, they're just Mai-Mai, but I think that they used to use it, but now they forgot, so we still remember that. We didn't forget it … We use it and most people say "what are you talking about?" It's the same language.

If English was the language of education in America for these students, then Mai-Mai appeared to be a language of rejection. It is important to note how Mai-Mai is most likely a vernacular language, and it is difficult to find reliable sources on its linguistic heritage. It is a Bantu language, as Mohammad stated, which means it is one of many Bantu languages that has most likely gone through several transformations as the Bantu people

moved across the African landscape via 19th century slave trade (see Besteman 7, 21).

The students I interviewed showed me how their use of language was multilingual, or "translingual." As Horner et al. observe, teachers might view translingualism as "a problem to manage" because time spent on languages is time away from the acquisition of English. Students' secretive employment of Mai-Mai might also garner suspicion. However, Horner et al. argue that translingualism should be regarded as a "resource for producing meaning" (303). I see Mohammad as having been strategic rather than secretive. As teachers, we want students to understand how certain discourse is appropriate for certain contexts, but we should value the moments in which students feel a different discourse, one that pushes us away, is necessary for their own purposes. Another student, Musa, expressed a similar sentiment, that he used different languages with different groups of friends:

> if it's with my American friends, English. If it's my Bantu brothers, it's Mai-Mai … My friends like speaking English, but you know, we don't want to lose this language so we have to speak it.

Pratt explains how "bilingualism" is a literate art of the contact zone (35). Mohammad, Musa, and their peers used Mai-Mai so others would not understand them, implying perhaps that others already did not understand them regardless of what language they used. Their use of "parody," as in the case of telling me they ate bugs or that they did not write because they were "from Africa," can be interpreted as a collaborative adoption of the discourses of power that continually represent them as foreign, unassimilable, and illiterate. These instances challenge audiences to see the value in a rhetorical strategy meant to push them away. If audiences are willing to do the work to see the value in such strategies, then they are one step closer to unlearning the discourses of power that limit

their understandings of refugee identity.

Language poses complications for aid workers and tutors when they have conflicting agendas regarding English language acquisition and they are looking for best ways to help students with their work. When I asked aid worker John about any observations he could make about the students' English literacy, both written and spoken, he told me about a struggle he was having when working with elementary school students on their accents:

> *What observations have you made about the differences between the spoken English literacy and the written English literacy of refugees?*
>
> I've noticed that their writing is very similar to the way their English is spoken, which means that sometimes nouns aren't made plural or little things like articles aren't used properly or just the way they speak with an accent. I was talking to a parent today, and he encouraged me to work on their accents. That's something that is kind of difficult to discourage, that speaking in an accent would be wrong, but we do have to work on pronunciation in some cases, so that's a difficulty for me because I want to respect where they come from and also provide them with what would be expected in English pronunciation.

I conducted a follow-up interview with John, asking him to read some of my preliminary findings and respond. This was one of the points he wished to elaborate on further:

> Regarding pronunciation, it has been asked of me several times by parents to work on accents and to help reduce them and I have trouble with that because I see accent as part of who a person is. So, I don't want to reduce their accent, but I also want to provide them with the pronunciation they're expected to use…reducing their accent is kind of like telling someone to stop being who they are in a way.

The issue of "accent" is an example in which John, tutors, parents, and especially students were placed in an almost impossible situation by larger structures of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson), or what has been described by linguists such as Rosina Lippi-Green as "standard language ideology." Lippi-Green defines standard language ideology

as "a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed from above, and which takes as its model the written language. The most salient feature is the goal of suppression of variation of all kinds" (417). In this case, it was not surprising that an aid worker who worked with such a diverse student population would express concern over "reducing" the students' accents." Of course, parents wanted their children to be accepted. They were at the mercy of powers which express "bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language" in a way white, native speakers of English are not.

In contrast, John was concerned about his own participation in these structures of power. Literacy sponsorship is embedded within standard language ideology. It is the means by which literacy of the standard is passed on to language learners. The danger is that language seems natural. As Lippi-Green notes:

> it is not surprising that many individuals do not recognize the fact that, for
> spoken language, variation is systematic, structured, and inherent, and that
> the *national standard* is an abstraction. What *is* surprising, even deeply
> disturbing, is the way that many individuals – though they consider
> themselves democratic, even-handed, and free of prejudice – hold
> tenaciously to a standard ideology which attempts to justify restriction of
> individuality and rejection of the *other*. (422)

Standard language ideology is the most damaging to those who are continually *Othered* by structures of power. I think this is more complicated than students "losing" their home language or culture through processes of language assimilation. Because refugee students are *Othered* by more than just language, but by race, skin color, ethnicity, geography,

economics, religion, gender, etc., learning English with a "reduced" accent will not diminish oppression in their lives, but it may shift oppression in complex ways.

Accent does not always produce negative experiences for the refugee students I interviewed. One student, Michelle, who was forced to leave the Congo and live in refugee camps in South Africa, learned English while in South Africa and thus came to the U.S. with a South African, British-affected English:

> Well all my teachers are positive. I mean, they were amazed that I'm from Africa, and they like my accent. Most of them are always like, "I like your accent," and stuff."

Michelle told me she spoke three languages: English, Swahili, and Langala, but she also understood French, having been taught it in Congolese schools. She had a diverse and accomplished linguistic background. Even though Michelle saw this as positive (or at least not negative), I have questions about the extent to which her accent was being exoticized by her teachers and peers. Michelle also said it was hard in South Africa to go to school without knowing English yet:

> We didn't fit in because kids and older people—if you don't speak their language, they are just against you. They had special names for people like refugees from different countries. It's almost like they kind of know you because of your struggles with the language so they call you names and stuff.

Beyond the scope of accent as a marker of difference within standard language ideology, Michelle experienced the discourses of power that follow the globalization of the English language. After going to school in the Congo that taught the colonizing language of French, Michelle then travels to South Africa where an intersection of postcolonial contexts made immigrants rely on English and continued to subject people to colonially imposed education systems. According to Thiong'o,

The colonial education system denies that the colonized have real human

languages…This had one aim: to make a child despise his language, hence

the values carried by that language, and by implication despises himself

and the people who spoke a language which now was the cause of his

daily humiliation and corporal punishment. (94)

If we listen to this one student's story, we see that similar colonial language ideologies

are continuing to have effects on postcolonial subjects.

Under the guise of being an efficient and neutral means of communication, those

in power are able to continue the hegemonic promotion of English as a global language.

But, as language scholar Braj B. Kachru acknowledges, in every "English-using

country," the role of English as a "medium of power, control, authority, and

cohesion…[is] in the hands of a small portion of the total population," setting up the

conditions for English to be a "language of oppression" (13). Additionally, Stuart Hall

argues that "global mass culture" is "centered in the West" and "it always speaks

English…English as it has invaded and as it has hegemonized a variety of other

languages" (179). Scholars such as Thiong'o, Kachru, and Hall seek to denaturalize

English for the purpose of positioning English language education within relationships of

inequality. They want to make transparent the role English plays in reconstituting those

relationships on a global scale and how images of its power as a "neutral" and "practical"

language are circulated.

The students I interviewed described situations in which not knowing English

made them feel like an outsider. In the case of Michelle, she was in a multilingual context

that privileged English as the language of education, so it was hard for her to "fit in" and

be accepted by students and teachers:

> I was the only one. I was the only one because the people of South Africa, their kids go to school, so they already knew, and I was the only one who didn't know. I think that they would ask me questions and I would just stare at them awkwardly because I didn't know what they were saying.

Similar to the Lost Boys of Sudan, Michelle had exposure to the English language before being resettled in the U.S. I asked her how prepared she felt when she started school in the U.S. and she said,

> I was prepared actually because at the time I already knew English. When I went to school here, the first couple of weeks were hard and all of a sudden I started getting honor roll. When they called me, I didn't even know. I thought they were making a mistake, but I got honor rolls for three semester. So it was kind of easy, but math will always be the hardest for me. English is better for me.

Her success was evident in the increasing responsibility she was given in the after-school program. At first, I would help her with her math homework (not good for either of us), but then this past year, she became a tutor herself, helping the younger students in a summer math program.

While some of the results are the same, the Bantu students communicated a different experience. They felt most like outsiders when they first started school in the U.S. Mohammad told me the story of his resettlement and how he had little exposure to English while in Somalia:

> *Do you remember when you first started to learn English? What was it like?*
>
> I remember, I started learning English in Africa. They have a school, it's a private school. Mommy always say go to school, learn some English, but all I knew was "how are you?" and "I'm fine." That's what I knew, that was my English right there. Actually, I wasn't going to school because I had to look for food. I didn't learn. I just knew this, and how you say "My name" and that stuff and a couple letters, ABC, 123, and count to ten,

> that's it. That was my English, my little English. And that's when we came to America.

Mohammad called his previous exposure to English his "little English," a striking descriptor of what the dominant class views as the "naturalized" language of business and economics. Mohammad then told me what it was like when he first arrived in Chicago, went to school there, and then later moved to Texas and then Milwaukee:

> Well, when we came to America, my house was like a library. They prepared everything for us. Books, all that stuff. But, the school I went to, they weren't teaching me English. They just put a big book in front of me. The teacher didn't talk to me. Actually, I learned English here, in Milwaukee. When I was in Chicago, I didn't know how to speak English. I tried, but we moved to Texas, and I was still the same, but when I came to Milwaukee, yes, I learned how to speak English the true way. And I'm still learning. I will still learn. I will never give up on it. Until I reach where I want to.

He cited not having any ESL classes in Chicago and Texas, but finally having them when he came to Milwaukee. Where he wanted to "reach" was going to college to become a teacher. He wanted to teach young students in elementary school and kindergarten. For composition teacher-scholars like Min-Zhan Lu, the "true way" of using English is often "product" oriented, wherein instead of regarding English as a "site of struggle," students "attempt to passively absorb and automatically reproduce a predetermined form" ("Professing" 500). When students feel anxiety about the "true way" of English, perhaps they are expressing an awareness of what is desired or expected of them as English-language learners. Of course, when Mohammad said that he "will never give up," he also voiced a tension between those expectations and his own desires as a language user. Perhaps the "true way" was his sense of himself as being able to use English for a variety of purposes rather than as merely a "predetermined form."

Musa told a similar story. He also did not attend school in Somalia, saying, "to go

to school in Africa, you have to pay. So my parents weren't able to afford it. But I used to learn Arabic." When he first came to the U.S., he lived in Virginia, and there it seems a teacher took the time to work with him one-on-one:

> My teacher, Mr. Kramer, he always used to read books to me. And then suddenly, the same book everyday he was reading, and I started catching up and started reading … And then he taught me the alphabet, and then from there he taught me how to sound the words, how certain words come together, how they sound, so I picked it up from there and just started reading.

Even with individualized attention, he still expressed feeling uncomfortable because of language:

> I was in fourth grade and I felt kind of different, you know, meeting new people. I felt different because I didn't know the language, but after a few years, I got along with it because I started learning English. I started hearing things, hearing English, what people were talking about, and that really helped, and then it was like everyday I wanted to go to school. At first, when I didn't know English, I didn't want to go to school because people didn't know my language, and I didn't know their language. I didn't know what they were saying. And since then, I started learning it, saying the words and hearing things from other people. Then I liked it. I was the first one out of the house, getting onto the bus.

Both Bantu students expressed an appreciation for education that was previously inhibited by not knowing English. Like the students in the refugee camp whose curiosity made them wake their teacher up so that they could go to class, Adam and Musa describe their enthusiasm for learning, which only came after they started to learn English.

Conclusions that assume successful English acquisition for these speakers should be questioned. For one, literacy sponsors who belong to the dominant class—white, college-educated, English-speakers—could envision the role of the English language in these stories as empowering African refugees. In all three cases, learning English enabled students to communicate with their peers and teachers and opened up further

opportunities for learning. In each case, students told a story of success. These are the models that many in media celebrate, that sponsors like Chanoff report and circulate. These models support American brands of literacy at the expense of the other personally valuable experiences refugee students have.

My alternative interpretation exposes how the English language appeared as a regulatory force in these stories, how it restrained the students' physical and rhetorical mobility. Michelle, who found herself in a multilingual environment, needed to trade one colonizer's language for another, as English was the only language that gave her cultural capital in the South African refugee camp. While Michelle cited not knowing "the language" as contributing to her feelings of *otherness*, it was no coincidence that the language was English. It appears to be a "natural" solution. One might read it as a "unifying" force in the refugee camp, but one might also read it as a "coercive" force, one that *Others* the non-English speaker and provokes others to call her names, drawing attention to her refugeeness.

In contrast, Mohammad and Musa found themselves in distinctly monolingual settings in Virginia, Chicago, Texas, and Milwaukee, where not knowing "the language" made them not want to go to school. As Catherine Prendergast observes, English, as a "form of currency," can act as a "lubricant" for the mobility of people (6, 127). This mobility is quite literal. It can keep a student from going to school or it can get him to be the "first one out of the house" in the morning. Though Prendergast shows the English language to be a "form of currency," and Brandt observes how literacy is a "raw material," Brandt also reminds us that literacy is a "means of production – that is, a tool, an instrument, a technology" (171), and in this way, English language literacy is revealed

to be a locus of power. Not only is it something to be bought and traded, exported and regulated, but those who are in power control its use and dissemination. Students like the refugee students I interviewed, tell stories that could be interpreted as examples of successful language acquisition, but from the point of view of literacy as a means of production, these are also stories about labor, about how the English language made more work for them. It transformed their flexible and multilingual language proficiencies into the labor of monolingualism. As Brandt observes,

> The commandeering of literacy by economic interests in the twentieth
> century registers most profoundly in the changing networks through which
> literacy has been sponsored. Sponsors are embodied in the materials of
> reading and writing, the institutional aegies and rationales under which
> learning is carried out, the histories by which practices arrive at the scenes
> of learning, the causes to which teachers and learners put their efforts, and
> the advantages, both direct and indirect, that stand to be won by the
> sponsors themselves. (193)

Musa's view of English shows evidence of this power and how English literacy had been a necessity for him:

> *How important do you think English is for going to college? Getting a*
> *job?*
>
> All over the world, English is a major language. People go for English in
> parts of the world and that's important because I'm going to be the first
> one going to college in my family. And English is a language for
> communication. That's how important English is. It's very important
> because most people are speaking English in business. If you want to go
> into business, most people expect you to speak good English. That's why
> it's very, very important.

Reading these stories of English language acquisition as narratives of success would do a

disservice to the labor students performed in different rhetorical situations. It would

ignore the strategic ways they chose to accommodate, appropriate, or resist the

hegemonic powers of English language education. At the same time, standard language

ideology (Lippi-Green), myths of "linguistic homogeneity" (Matusda),

"monolingual/monocultural bias" (Canagarajah), and the perceived links between

literacy, citizenship, and development (M. Young; Graff), might still appropriate Musa's

observation of the importance of English and render it a successful transmission of these

dominant brands of literacy.

The colonizer's gate-keeping mechanisms continue to artificially regulate African

minds and bodies, continue to *Other*. Refugee students then bear the burden of

transmitting the commodity that is the English language to their parents. This is a story

common among first-generation immigrant students in the U.S. While the parents work to

provide for their children, the children work to teach their parents what little English they

might have time for. Michelle experienced this in South Africa as well as the United

States. I asked Michelle how often she spoke English at home and she said,

> *How often do you speak English at home? With your family? With your*
> *friends? At school?*
>
> All the time. Unless I'm talking to my mom, and so we speak Swahili, but
> most of the time, me and my siblings mostly speak in English. When we
> were in South Africa and we were learning English and she didn't know it,
> she made us speak English at home so that she could so that she could get
> a job because to get a job in South Africa, you have to know English. So,
> she would make us teach her. She would write a sentence down and then
> she'd give it to us to correct it and see if it's right and most of the time she
> would make us speak it so she could understand it. And the English that
> my mom knows, we taught it to her at home.

Michelle also noted how she and her sister helped their mother go through INS interviews

because the interviews were in English. Like the stories of the Lost Boys of Sudan in

Chapter Three, these interviews would determine whether or not Michelle and her family were eligible for resettlement in the U.S. She said the process took five years. There are a variety of factors why it took so long for Michelle's family to be resettled, and some families are never successful, but the common factor, even in the stories of the Lost Boys of Sudan, is that English plays a prominent role in resettlement interviews.

The relationship Michelle has with her mother and siblings regarding literacy is reciprocal. Michelle said that she liked to read and she liked to write for school, but she did not like to write for herself: "So you don't like writing for fun, like in a journal?" I asked. "No," she said,

> My mom makes me though. Her psychologist told her to, so she makes us write. She bought us journals, so if there's something troubling us then we write it down.

This is probably the most clear example of how refugees can be their own sponsors of literacy. Michelle and her siblings were completely on their own when helping their mother learn English so she could get a job in South Africa. In turn, Her mother taught them to understand how writing can help them process traumatic events.

Mohammad expressed a similar link between English and employment. He told me how he had experienced the limitations not knowing English places on workplace relations or the chance of getting a job in the U.S. for him and his peers:

> English is important. Because most of the jobs want someone that speaks English. It was me and some other guys, we went to get some job applications, but some of the parents, they don't know how to speak English, so the manager came and picked two guys because they knew how to speak English well, and you know, so he picked them. It's important.

I think Mohammad was talking about both parents and his peers trying to get jobs. In either case, applicants who spoke better English were chosen over others.

While my own characterizations of the English language sponsorship in this chapter have been predominantly pejorative, drawing from legacies of colonialism and the ways in which English serves to regulate rather than liberate, my participants had a more forgiving view. For instance, Musa told me that he liked to write poems and songs in both Mai-Mai and English, and all three students expressed an interest in reading novels. Canagarajah warns against sweeping arguments about the dominance of the English language throughout the world. Instead, he frames his own research as "a thinking on language, culture, and pedagogy that is motivated by the lived reality and everyday experience of periphery subjects" (5), and he explains that models which "show how pervasively and subtly socio-political forces may shape the learning process" tend to "overstate the case" via a "deterministic and impersonal perspective," but that "domination is never wholesale or inexorable" (24-25). In this project, I examine the socio-political forces of globalization through the links made between the global spread of the English language, the forced displacement of people, and the confluence of these forces in literacy sponsorship initiatives meant to aid in refugee resettlement. I do not think the power dynamics of literacy sponsorship should be overlooked, but nor do I think the hegemonic tendencies of English be thought of as absolute. My research participants demonstrated an awareness of the power dynamics of sponsorship and their resistance to it. In their stories, they demonstrated how they used "literate arts" to resist the forces of their "little Englishes." Through parody, multilingual usage, and storytelling, the refugee students in this project illustrated the competing and contradictory effects of literacy sponsorship in the contexts of refugee resettlement.

Conclusion: A Literacy of Refugeeness

As literacy sponsors generally and as composition teacher-scholars specifically, we can develop a more responsible ethics for working with refugee students and writers by paying careful attention to how students use literacy for a variety of purposes: to preserve cultural identity, to conceal, to feel accepted at school, to help another gain employment, to be chosen for resettlement, to work through personal tribulations. Important to understand is how these acts of literacy are not all in English. In the case of students using Mai-Mai, they seemed to both use it to reject English while they also acknowledged that English was an important language in their lives. To consider these students as "emissaries of literacy" is to see how all of these different acts of literacy are valuable to their sense of themselves as language users, that these are resources rather than obstacles to be overcome. Because these acts of literacy are most often multilingual, they demonstrate how English can, in fact, commingle with other languages in positive and productive ways (V. Young). English has not replaced other languages for these students. Instead, it has co-existed and become another resource for them to use in their dynamic negotiations of the socio-political forces that subscribe to and promote standard, monolingual language ideology.

The refugee students in this project have complicated relationships with migration, citizenship, and identity. They are adept storytellers and accomplished rhetors. They act as emissaries, not of the refugee experience, but of the complexities of literacy learners and language users who cross the globe. Refugee students appear to fit—not the

ideal candidate for literacy sponsorship—but, what Lu calls the "ideal" user of English: "someone who is not only acutely aware of the pressure to function as an English-only user but also attentive to the capacities, rights, and necessities of change in all living things: people, their lives, society, culture, the world, and the language itself" ("Living-English Work" 608). As English users, my participants were "acutely aware" of the contexts in which their English language learning took place. As multilingual, or "translingual," language users, they showed me how such contexts are interdependent and how language acquisition does not occur in isolation or in linguistically homogeneous spaces.

The term *emissary* is meant to work in correlation with *sponsor*, not in opposition to it. As with the Lost Boys of Sudan, the refugee students I interviewed have experiences that are often ignored or degraded according to deficit models of literacy and education. Yet, I have shown that we do not have to look too far or dig too deep to see how the experiences of refugee students and writers are resources from which they draw, enabling them to have dynamic and critical interactions with English literacy. Canagarajah's arguments about multilingual writers is applicable here:

> Since students from multicultural, multilingual communities generally confront conflicting discourses in practicing literacy, a useful pedagogical strategy is to motivate them to engage with discourses as they encode and decode texts, to make them conscious of discursive tensions, and realize the positive potential of negotiating for expression. (169)

I would like to extend Canagarajah's suggestion to the realm of literacy sponsorship. My participants told stories of their own confrontation with "conflicting discourses in

practicing literacy," but as I showed in Chapter Three in regards to the Lost Boys of Sudan, such stories can often be ignored, overwritten, or appropriated by logics that construct an ideal refugee subjectivity. On the *sponsor* side, it is clear we need a greater attention to detail, to the voices of refugee students and writers, and to the perspectives of those we sponsor. Refugee students share much in common with other multilingual and immigrant students, but one important difference is their complex relationship with aid. In some ways, like with the Lost Boys, they can be rendered as the "model minority" because the term "refugee" attaches a "lost and found" narrative to their constructed identity. This sometimes depicts them as a "blank slate" upon which the traditional master narrative of American exceptionalism and charity can be written. They are, in this sense, ideal candidates for literacy sponsorship. These assumptions are often made at the expense of other multilingual and immigrant students who might suffer similar hardships but do not have the *refugee* label applied to them.

Thinking of refugee students and writers as "emissaries of literacy" involves a commitment to gaining a literacy *of* refugeeness on the part of literacy sponsors. The specific contexts of Africa, with an acknowledgment that such focus is limited in scope, is also generalizable because of the ways these discourses of power about refugees are circulated and consumed. Thinking of refugee students as "emissaries of literacy" rather than as objects of sponsorship, supports a reflective, ethical, and responsible perspective for doing literacy work in refugee communities, a perspective that acknowledges we have much to learn about the discourses of power within which we work. Much like my own experience of sitting with a student who exclaimed, "We are from Africa. We do not write," a the notion "emissaries of literacy" asks us to examine the positionality of

teacher and student in these kinds of literacy-learning occasions.

Even when it is something as benign as checking over ESL homework, helping with math problems, or reading a book out loud for extra English practice, the assumptions we bring to these occasions can greatly affect the literacy-learning experiences of refugees in the U.S. Likewise, in composition, "basic writing," and ESL classrooms, we can practice a more ethical approach to non-standard language use, committing to learning from the valuable experiences students bring to English language education.

CHAPTER FIVE: TRANSNATIONAL COMPOSITION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

This chapter describes the implications my research with transnational student populations has for composition pedagogy and the professional development of literacy sponsors. The dynamic rhetorical strategies used by refugee students has made me see how literacy sponsors need better resources to help them unlearn the discourses of power shaping sponsorship in the contexts of globalization. Close attention to the stories refugees tell can help literacy sponsors develop a critical awareness of the discourses of power imposed upon multilingual students, such as the resettled refugee students in this project.

Teaching is, in reality, an act of sponsorship. And, though the contexts of literacy sponsorship in the community are different than the contexts of the composition classroom, research on literacy in refugee communities has several implications for literacy and language instruction at the college level. Composition classrooms are becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual—especially basic writing and ESL courses—reflecting progressively more diverse community populations. For instance, Matsuda observes, "as the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) students continues to increase in U.S. colleges and universities, more and more writing teachers in various instructional contexts are finding themselves in unfamiliar territory" ("Situating" 99). Furthermore, Matsuda argues that in terms of research, "the development of composition studies does not seem to reflect this trend" ("Composition" 699). In addition to the little ESL training composition teachers receive, teachers and other literacy

sponsors find their rhetorical mobility limited when working with students who have backgrounds many deem to be insufficient compared to "American ways of learning."

My research demonstrates how the asymmetric power dynamics of literacy sponsorship in the contexts of multilingualism are perpetuated by the discourses of power surrounding English language education that limit the rhetorical mobility of both sponsors and students. I suggest literacy sponsors address the problem of power by reflecting on their own assumptions about refugees and the contexts from which they are resettled. We must also listen attentively to the stories refugees tell and the ways they choose to tell them in order to learn how refugee students and writers appropriate and speak back to those same assumptions.

This chapter is divided into three sections: *the politics of language*, in which I examine methods for working with multilingual students; *contextual awareness*, wherein I discuss my experience using refugee narratives as teaching materials; and *professional development*, in which I suggest strategies for sponsors who want to learn more about the terms *refugee* and *Africa*.

In the first section, I refer to the politics of language use to suggest ways we can approach increasingly multilingual classrooms with radical rather than prescriptive pedagogical strategies. My experience in refugee communities has shown me how important it is to understand multilingual writers and writing, the contexts they come from, and the institutional support they receive, not only in ESL courses, but in all writing classes on campus. Furthermore, as teachers, we cannot assume "linguistic homogeneity" in any of our classrooms (Matsuda). A progressive or radical view of language does not mean we ask students to unreflectively resist standard forms of

English. Instead, we try to make transparent the demands and expectations imposed by standard forms while simultaneously showing students that we value and learn from their personal, linguistic histories.

To contest the discourses framing literacy sponsorship and multilingualism in the classroom, I draw from my experience as a teacher of "basic" writing and ESL as well as composition scholarship that emphasizes practices of reflection and negotiation. Scholars who challenge the pressures of standard language ideology continue to explore the ways different vernaculars and discourses are devalued in educational settings. Vershawn Ashanti Young, for example, observes how varieties of language, such as African American English Vernacular and standard American English, intermingle with one another. Young poses a challenge to pedagogies that ask students to "code-switch," pedagogies that separate varieties of language in order to promote standard forms. While critical pedagogues and sponsors work to make learning occasions as egalitarian as possible, students still struggle with finding their voice in different settings where expectations might be more aligned with these discourses of power. In response, scholars like Lu and Canagarajah propose strategies that enhance students' abilities to negotiate amongst competing discourses and expectations.

In the second section, I discuss how discourses of power constrain or limit the meaning of "context," and in the case of refugee students and writers, these discourses are informed by and reproduce colonial logics of racism and liberal-centric ideologies of aid, pity, hope, and charity. These discourses limit the extent of sponsors' contextual awareness. I see college writing courses as places of literacy sponsorship in which students are exposed to competing sets of ideologies, and I explore this space by

examining opportunities to foster an awareness of global contexts in the writing classroom. In contrast to working with multilingual and multicultural students on language, my approach to context exposes all students and sponsors to stories of refugee experience, using writing to build a working vocabulary for talking about refugee communities in ways that unlearn and resist dominant discourse.

I draw from scholars like Boltanski, who analyzes the ways in which audiences interact with narratives of human suffering, and scholars like Ratcliffe, who describe strategies for working with students on issues of race. I also draw from personal experience of assigning students stories about refugee experience. In the fall of 2010, I taught a course on the rhetorics of refugee narratives, and I use examples from the students' writing to talk about how students responded to such stories. Many of my students were education majors who were required to take a 200-level rhetoric class, thus I see them as future sponsors of literacy.

In the third section, by focusing on professional development, we—as sponsors of varying sorts—can foster a fuller awareness of literacy sponsorship in refugee communities. In this case, I focus specifically on training teachers and tutors to be more attentive to the complexities of refugee experience. This section is about teachers working with other teachers and how we might use our reflective practices and contextual knowledge to develop a "literacy of refugeeness," a more ethical paradigm for literacy sponsorship.

The Politics of Language: Working with Multilingual Students

Students who identify as multilingual are often tracked into basic writing and ESL

classes, but multilingual students can be found in all college writing classes. While my research has implications for working with students who do not identify as speaking more than one language, i.e. native English speakers, I focus my discussion of pedagogy on working with multilingual students because I want to show how the politics of language use affects teachers' perceptions.

Matsuda attributes a lack in teacher preparation to the perceived "needs" and "extra time" it takes to work with ESL students ("Situating" 104) and the "professionalism" gained by a

field when it identifies as a specialization ("Composition" 704). Matsuda explains how the division of labor between ESL and composition studies inaccurately represents classroom realities because even though ESL students are labeled as such, their lives "continue to be affected by the institutional practices within composition studies because of their continued presence in composition classes" ("Composition" 701). Even though there is a *disciplinary* division of labor, it does not necessarily follow that there is always a division of students. Depending upon the institution, ESL students may or may not be placed into a "separate track" of composition courses that "parallel" sections of courses designed for "native" English speakers ("Myth" 647). ESL students may elect to take composition courses in a separate track, or they may elect to remain in courses with "native" English speakers because of perceived stigmas attached to ESL.

Matsuda also observes that despite a general increase of ESL and international students in "mainstream" composition courses, teacher-training assumes an English-speaking student body that leaves out the particular needs and contexts of English language learners. Matsuda writes, "It is not unusual for teachers who are overwhelmed

by the presence of language differences to tell students simply to 'proofread more carefully' or to 'go to the writing center'; those who are not native speakers of dominant varieties of English are thus being held accountable for what is not being taught" (640). Because my colleagues have identified me as an ESL teacher, they now come to me with questions about the ESL students in their non-ESL designated classes. Often, these questions take the form of an exasperated "what do I do?" Even when my colleagues have voiced a progressive stance toward language use, they seem distracted or concerned when a student in their class exhibits ESL "problems" in their writing, which can range from grammatical errors to reading comprehension. Yet, when we have collaboratively evaluated student writing that exhibits such features in a professional development setting, language difference does not seem to affect these teachers' evaluations.

Lack of teacher preparation reflects larger institutional, cultural, and societal perceptions of the English language and its global dominance as a lingua franca. Matsuda argues that the dominant image of students represents a "myth of linguistic homogeneity," or the ways teachers, programs, and institutions imagine classrooms to be composed of "native" English speaking bodies—both student and teacher (639). Many students and teachers do not fit this image, not only international, immigrant, and refugee students, but students whose households might speak another language, or students who speak less privileged varieties of English such as African American English Vernacular. "Native" is constructed as standard, neutral, and value-free, reflecting the image of the English language itself as empowering or uplifting, as is the case with refugee students and writers. Exposing this myth, making its assumptions transparent, shows how students are positioned within local and global contexts that produce, circulate, and allow for the

consumption of discourses of power about language and literacy.

Perhaps what my colleagues observe in their classes is something more related to the students' performance in class or perceived feelings of isolation but is manifested in teachers' responses to language use in a text. That is, when students perceive an environment that assumes an English-speaking student population, they might feel excluded. In my ESL classes, students are surrounded by others who are both like them and not like them—they all come from different backgrounds but share the experience of learning English. I do not perceive feelings of isolation, and students seem to feel free to voice their views on language politics.

Composition scholars like Lu propose strategies for imagining a more accurate representation of students, thus helping us work more effectively and ethically with multilingual writers. For example, Lu sees language as a "site of struggle" ("Professing" 500) in which "more and more English courses are informed by a view of language as a site of struggle among conflicting discourses with unequal socio-political power" (489). Lu argues for the use of student texts as a pedagogical tool to show students how we might read "errors," not as mistakes, but as acts of and opportunities for "negotiation." Processes of negotiation between students' own voices, vernaculars, "errors," and the academic discourses they are trying to appropriate are important to foster.

Teachers who want to make negotiation a priority should not do so at the expense of teaching students about standard, academic discourse. Detractors of multilingual composing often make this misinterpretation of radical or progressive language pedagogies. As Lu argues, students may produce standard forms in their writing, but "without the negotiation, their choice would be resulting from an attempt to passively

absorb and automatically reproduce a predetermined form," and "if and when this student experienced some difficulty mastering a particular code, she would view it as a sign of her failure as a learner and a writer" (500). The goal for progressive language pedagogies is not necessarily to dismiss the expectations and conventions of academic discourse. We would do a disservice to students when they encounter competing expectations in other classes. But, as Lu acknowledges, students can often feel alienated and demoralized by a failure to adequately acquire or "master" academic discourse. Strategies of negotiation can help students understand how they can actively learn standard forms while understanding that these forms are constructed by institutions and are subjective.

A focus on the writing process rather than on the final product helps students practice acts of negotiation that make visible the expectations of standard English. Student writing is a central text in the courses I teach. Rhetorical analysis has helped me present student writing as objects of analysis to my students. For instance, using a rhetoric like the *DK Handbook*, which reminds us that "even classrooms are rhetorical situations," helps me communicate to students the context of being in my class. I do this to call attention to the material and political realities of a required composition course and how those realities might shape the purposes of their writing. In a basic writing course, I ask students to talk about their previous relationships with education, acknowledging their frustration at being placed in a non-credited course. In an ESL course, I ask students how knowing that their audience is a group of predominantly white, native English-speakers might affect their sense of their audience's expectations. By using student writing as a central text in either course, students can apply rhetorical analysis to the writing of their colleagues, which enables them to consider student writing as being

intentional and strategic, as a negotiation of the audience expectations we have previously defined together.

For example, when I asked my ESL class to analyze the choices made by writers in two anonymous student essays, one of my students compared how both he and the writers used emotion as a strategy, but he thought that his writing lacked logic while the other writers were able to use emotion to connect to their audience. He writes, "What caught my interest in the writing of sample one was emotion… The student then reeled in the audience into the story through connection, because it's something that a reader can relate to." Here, my student finds the emphasis on emotion to be useful for getting the reader's attention. When he analyzes his own writing, he explains,

> My imagination is vast and wide but my facts and proof are considered un-proficient. I have lots of great ideas and my thought progress goes on forever and there's always questioning to my work. There's always more that keeps coming and going in my mind and my work is more of an emotion than logical.

He states how sometimes his stream-of-consciousness writing style in rough drafts can help him generate ideas, but that "most times it is unimportant to the main purpose when considering finding the answer." He expresses a concern over "finding the answer" or having a strong purpose because he knows an audience of teachers will be evaluating his work. He values writing that is emotional, and sees how it can be used as a strategy to connect with his audience, while his own use of emotion lacks "logic." For me, it is important to see how this student reflects on his own writing style in relation to how writers make different rhetorical choices when trying to meet the expectations of their audience.

Negotiation can also be enacted through the published texts students are assigned

to read. In my experience working with diverse student populations in basic writing and ESL courses, giving students complex, academic and scholarly writing to respond to demonstrates a political commitment to treating students as scholars in their own right. Some might critique academic writing for being exclusionary and alienating because it is seen to come from a long tradition of privileged discourse (white, male, upper class). But, it is also the case that complex ideas and situations require complex language to describe them. In a basic writing class where many students have been told that they "can't" read or write in scholarly ways, I see a value in challenging them to do so. To balance these factors, I typically choose texts by women and people of color who examine the subject of marginalization. Anecdotally speaking, when colleagues and I were presenting this approach to a group of educators, it was brought to our attention that perhaps these texts were too "difficult" for "these students." One person said that if she would not give her two-year old daughter a high school book to read, how could basic writing students be given graduate level articles? Statements like this are a sentiment that infantilizes remedial students as well as ESL and refugee students. To me, this indicates an imperative for teaching difficult texts—not so that students can learn the content—but so students can know they are being taken seriously as writers, that their literacy practices have the power to influence their teacher.

The use of academic texts in an ESL class can serve additional purposes in terms of negotiating academic discourse. ESL students struggle with idiomatic language. But, ESL students sometimes are given texts that are more "accessible," such as popular magazine articles. This can be a contradictory approach because what seems accessible to native English speakers can often contain a significant amount of idiomatic language.

Having students grapple with academic discourse which might be thought of as less accessible, can circumvent struggles with idiomatic language in order to see the kinds of choices academic writers make. Then, students can engage in the kinds of close language analysis that they already have experience with, analysis that pays attention to the details of grammar, when a scholar changes the form of a word to create a neologism, or when writers use prepositions in ways that show theoretical relationships. For example, one essay I use in my ESL class is "Articulating the Exception: X-Mission" by Ursula Biemann. This is a dense, theoretical text about the space of Palestinian refugee camps. I chose this text for two reasons. First, the content is global in scope, which I hoped would appeal to multilingual, multicultural, and international students (as well as my own research interests). Second, Biemann's writing has both abstract and concrete characteristics, is historically situated, and includes technical and academic language that requires careful reading.

The first passage from Biemann's essay warranted a significant amount of class discussion:

> *X-Mission* explores the logic of the refugee camp as one of the oldest extraterritorial zones. The camp is part of a larger family of extraterritorial spaces, known to be "in," but not "of," the contexts which they are located, and may therefore be viewed as an exemplary site for the study of the endless incisions into the body of the nation. (94)

I typically approach discourse like this with students according to methods of "close-reading" as described by Jane Gallop in her essay, "The Ethics of Reading: Close Encounters." That is, instead of asking students to summarize the "main point" of the

article, I ask them to pay attention to "unusual vocabulary," repeated words, and anything that seems surprising or "unexpected" (7). Students in my ESL class immediately pointed out the fact that "extraterritorial" was not in their dictionaries. This is a useful example of academic discourse in which a writer uses a neologism that is familiar to audiences within their discipline. In this case, I asked students to separate the word into its parts, "extra" and "territory," both of which they were familiar with, and as our discussion unfolded, students were able to come to an understanding of how the word was functioning within the larger context of Biemann's article to show that refugee camps are "extra" or "outside" traditional notions of governed territory. The next sentence was also marked by students as being "unusual." Biemann's discussion of "'in' but not 'of'" confused students, perhaps because for second-language learners, distinctions between English prepositions can be one of the hardest "rules" to learn. Students told me how they took "of" to mean "from" and a sense of belonging, while "in" was a physical presence. This phrase enabled the class, them and me, to have a specific discussion of the function of each preposition and how the choice of one preposition over another can have important implications for people's lives because of the way these words express relationships.

A radical goal for teacher-scholars who value critical negotiation is to revise language conventions and expectations rather than enforce standard language ideologies. Young, for instance, in his efforts to undo generations of racial discrimination based on the false division between privileged forms of English and AAVE, argues that we should value "hybrid" forms of language at all levels (121), and "privilege the integration of diverse language habits within the standard lingua franca" (122). Similarly, Horner et al.

propose a "translingual" approach which accounts for "the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally" (305). Such approaches not only question systematically prescribed uses of English, but also ask literacy sponsors to view users of English as dynamic political agents rather than as passive objects of standardized language conventions.

Lu describes the "ideal user of English" as "someone who is not only acutely aware of the pressure to function as an English-only user, but also attentive to the capacities, rights, and necessities of change in all living things" ("Living-English" 608). Regarding students as "users" of language entails supporting students as they negotiate between the "pressure" to change according to standard language ideologies and the "right" to change according to their own needs, desires, and experiences. Canagarajah describes this right as showing "how non-native students can go beyond the reproductive and deterministic influences of the English language and its discourses to display a measure of agency as they critically negotiate discourses in light of their preferred ideologies and rhetorical traditions" (168). Scholars who work with multilingual students in particular, like Lu, Canagarajah, and me argue that students bring a diverse range of literacy practices to the English language classroom, but many of these practices are ignored or dismissed as being products of foreignness, as obstacles to overcome rather than resources from which to draw.

All students can benefit from negotiating the politics of standard English. If we encourage students to see language as a "site of struggle," then they can, as David Bartholomae argues, find "some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the

other" (61). Not only are academic conventions rooted in a discipline, but they are also informed by structures of power that have historically endorsed standard language ideology. As Lippi-Green observes, "If asked about a wider possible view, and policies of acceptance, every teacher will point to the other institutions which support and propagate a standard language ideology. Employers have expectations, they will argue. There will be repercussions" (96). When students who might identify as "monolingual" are encouraged to see how language is subjective rather than natural, they might also see themselves as more proactive users of English.

Teaching methods that stress negotiation do not demand or prescribe that students change themselves, viewing them as deficient in some way and in need of transformation. Instead, these approaches help develop a students' ability and *mobility* to change according to their own needs and desires. Making room for struggle and negotiation in the classroom helps students see that rather than mimic academic forms of writing, they can feel free to fail, take risks, or draw from their own experience because they will feel secure knowing that discourse is fluid, heterogeneous, and sometimes contradictory, how each new rhetorical situation requires revised rhetorical practices.

Contextual Awareness: Working with Sponsors of Literacy

Often blamed for deficiencies in the learning experiences of refugee or other multilingual/multicultural students are the cultural practices literacy sponsors observe. Celebrated or exoticized, these cultures and geographical contexts are too often deemed "backward." According to Narayan, cultural explanations tend to increase a sense of foreignness about these discourses. Difference is "mediated" in ways that produce

"asymmetries in 'cultural explanation'" (88). A problem perceived to exist in a Kenyan refugee camp, for instance, like a reliance on memorization or a lack of supplies, is made sense of by literacy sponsors as a "Third World problem" or an "African way of learning." To rely on culture as an explanation for students' struggles with education requires that culture be addressed in isolation from other powerful socio-political factors which include race, class, economic development, and master narratives of aid, charity, transformation, and citizenship. Seeing these factors, of which culture is but one, as entwined and intrinsically dependent upon one another can help the project of literacy sponsorship be more critically reflective of its role in reproducing discourses of power.

In this section, I approach the subject of *context* by reflecting on my work with other sponsors of literacy in an effort to foster a greater awareness of refugee resettlement and transnationalism. While I draw on scholars who explore the topic of "Otherness," I also use examples from a course I taught on refugee narratives, English 240, as an illustrative case study. Students in this class were asked to write reflectively about their own responses, emotional or otherwise, to narratives of human suffering and refugee experience. Most of the class was comprised of English education majors, future literacy sponsors, and appeared to me to share traditional views on the purposes and goals of American education. My primary concern in this section is to suggest how teachers can support forms of literacy sponsorship that complicate rather than simplify multiculturalism, citizenship, and English language education.

Increasing our contextual and cultural awareness can be difficult. As a teacher—a literacy sponsor—reflecting on my own positions of privilege has been a starting point. In *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*, Ratcliffe emphasizes the

responsibility teachers and students have when it comes to discourses of power about race and privilege. She argues that we must "recognize how *all* our lives are implicated within cultural diversity" and that we must "acknowledge that we *all* possess a responsibility for naming, explaining, and addressing these implications" (original emphasis 136). Ratcliffe proposes that students and teachers "lay all gender and race 'cards' on the table in hopes of negotiating the existing (mis)perceptions about them and their connections" (135). While I agree that this can be productive work, if all students and teachers are expected to "lay all gender and race 'cards' on the table," then some participants in this exercise bear a greater burden or risk exposing parts of their lives that might mark them as Other. Refugees, for instance, should not feel obligated to share their stories of human suffering. In my opinion, accounting for privilege and the assumptions of well-meaning sponsors is more important than asking people to share their personal experiences with each other.

I believe that Ratcliffe's approach is most important for white students and white literacy sponsors to practice. I acknowledge that while it could be considered essentializing to identify whiteness as a broadly conceived object of critique, I do so in order to include the range of dominant discourses, rhetorics of power, and master narratives that have both historical and political implications for the naming of oppression, or what bell hooks describes as "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (*Feminist Theory* 118). As a teacher, I do not intend to essentialize my white students, but instead use terms like "white," to describe systemic privilege and racially biased discourses of power. Regardless of the individual, these discourses of power are learned through a structure of white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy, on both local and global

scales, and it is important to name them as such.

In many ways, my pedagogical approach combines Ratcliffe's insistence on "naming, explaining, and addressing" with Boltanksi's theory of "distant suffering." As discussed in Chapter Three, Boltanski explains that "distant suffering" describes the relationship between viewers of tragic events and the events themselves, wherein "there is an unfortunate who suffers" and "a spectator who views the suffering" (114). According to Boltanski, how "suffering" is mediated informs how the spectator reacts. One way to approach the naming of oppression as well as the issue of "remediation," is through representations of refugeeness. Some texts, like newspaper and magazine articles (such as the examples discussed in several other chapters of this project), are themselves rife with misrepresentation and hegemonic characterizations of refugees and Africa. Other texts, like the memoirs of the Lost Boys of Sudan, are more complex, and though written for a general, American, English-speaking audience, pose challenges to those discourses of power. These different texts mediate suffering in a variety of ways, and students in my English 240 class encountered many different perspectives during the semester.

My pedagogical approach to working with narratives of refugee experience extends what Ratcliffe argues when she states "*all* our lives are implicated within cultural diversity" to modes of writing and rhetorical analysis of the global contexts of refugee experience and human suffering. Boltanski argues something similar in his explanation of what he calls "active responsibility," or when "certain agents *realise* that they are themselves in a causal relationship with this suffering as agents of an oppressive system" (76). I see "certain agents" as being those spectators and sponsors who initially consider

themselves to have little or no connection to causes of human suffering, in this case, the causes of civil war in South Sudan and the bureaucratic blocks to asylum-seeking and immigration in the U.S. In English 240, students acknowledged that "we" could do more to help refugees resettle and feel comfortable here in the U.S., but I think a larger political struggle is to find ways of seeing how voting, consuming U.S. citizens are in a "causal relationship" with these seemingly foreign, distant events.

Asking students to reflect on their own reading practices helps develop an awareness of this "causal relationship." I broached this with students by asking them to do something that they were not familiar with, something I was not familiar with as a writing teacher. Instead of asking students to write from "outside" the text, as critics and essayists who would evaluate the rhetorical strategies of the authors, I asked them to write from "along side" the text, as readers of these stories. If students experienced a feeling of sympathy for the Lost Boys of Sudan, for example, I wanted them to explore that feeling through writing, where it came from, what might account for it, how it affected their relationship with the people in the story or with the author. If students saw these narratives of refugee resettlement as hopeful, then I wanted them to explore why and what assumptions they projected onto the text that might account for that feeling. I based these expected responses on my own research findings in which literacy sponsors expressed similar feelings of hope and sympathy. In my effort to have students engage critically with these discourses of power, I asked students to see value in questioning their responses as readers.

In order to give students specific methods for reading and writing in critically reflective ways, I asked them to read Gallop's essay on "close reading." This method has

a different purpose than when I asked to reflect on *themselves* as readers "inside" the text. Gallop wants readers to pay close attention to the language and author uses rather than on their own preconceived ideas. Gallop writes, "When we close read, we zero in on details but we do not immediately fit those details into our idea of the whole book. Instead we try to understand the details themselves as much as possible, to derive as much meaning as we can from them" (11). Though it is difficult to discuss the details of a story without making connections to the rest of the story or to events in the world that seem related, Gallop's approach is useful for counteracting readers' impulses to interpret texts in terms of their own preconceptions, or impulses to impose meaning that might not actually be in the text. Gallop calls this tendency "projection": "Projecting is the opposite of learning. As long as we project onto a text, we cannot learn from it, we can only find what we already know" (11). While this is a challenge, according to Gallop, close reading also has political implications because, as she observes, "Stereotypes about 'the other'—the other sex, the racialized other—are in fact technically projections. They derive from our notions of the self, and belong to a simplistic opposition of self versus other" (14). Many of the depictions describing the Lost Boys of Sudan as backward, "Stone Age," "ancient," and illiterate constitute the projections of literacy sponsors. When we read narratives of refugee experience, especially narratives of resettlement in which refugees like the Lost Boys come to the U.S. to pursue American education, it can be difficult to identify our projections, especially if they seem to be positive or hopeful. But such projections are often sinisterly linked to global narratives of exploitation and reproduce discourses of power.

Asking students to close-read produced varying results as students worked

through this method of analysis. One student found one author's use of the phrase "closed rooms" to be an important metaphor to examine closely. The original author, Peter I. Rose, writes, "Resettled refugees are persons apart, outsiders who peer into closed rooms" (9). In response, my student produced this passage:

> The concept of "closed rooms" almost portrays being American or being "Americanized" as an exclusive club in which everyone "seeks admittance." It confirms the idea that merely coming to American is not enough; one must pass some unwritten judgment of one's "acceptability" as an American. This sheds light on the harsh reality of America for immigrants and refugees alike. Though America's image is one of opportunity, freedom, and equality, it may only pertain to those that comply with American norms, thus the "closed door" metaphor of the separation between "American" and "foreign."

The student uses "closed rooms" to expand her understanding of the subject matter, such as the continued marginalization of immigrants and refugees despite the narratives of hope often projected on their stories of resettlement. Several students demonstrated a facility with this kind of critical writing, but I struggled with having them turn this critical analysis on themselves. In my feedback to this student, I often repeated that she could use more "I" statements in order to continue her analysis of "closed rooms" as it might relate to her own personal response to the stories of refugee experience, but she seemed reluctant. Students in general are sometimes hesitant to write in the first-person because of its ambivalent place in academic writing.

Postcolonial feminist theory has afforded me other ways of studying the complications of refugee experience with students. In English 240, I assigned several theoretical articles alongside narratives of refugee experience in order to provide students a lens through which to understand the stories. While I assigned essays on subjects such as Africa, transnationalism, and child soldiers, the essay they chose to work with most

was Trinh T. Minh-ha's "Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference." Simultaneously, my class found this essay both useful and perplexing. Trinh's writing rejects easy interpretation and sometimes provokes critique from readers as being intentionally difficult to understand. What students almost unanimously made use of was Trinh's passage on the "insider." The most quoted parts were: "The moment the insider steps out from the inside she's no longer a mere insider" and "She is, in other words, this inappropriate other" (218). Students applied these ideas in class discussion to the book *War Child* by Emmanuel Jal. The class collaboratively agreed to apply the term "inappropriate other" to Jal and took it to mean that he was forced to inhabit a kind of liminal space. He could no longer relate to his people in South Sudan because he had since "stepped out" and come to America, yet he would never feel at home in the U.S. because of his outsider, refugee status.

One student applied this logic in his final project to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina by examining the construct of insider/outsider:

> In terms of Trinh's work, these American's are most definitely still "insiders" to our nation and should be treated as such … They have simply lost their current homes, fleeing a hurricane that ripped through their home town and seeking refuge with fellow Americans. They still know the language, know the culture, know how our system works and so they should all still be considered insiders to our country or group. It is our right to deem them as such because they are a part of us. It is more complicated when we justify who can call the Lost Boys insiders or outsiders because we aren't a part of them or their natural culture, so who are we to give them labels that can effect how they assimilate or fit in in other countries such as the United States.

Like journalists who covered Hurricane Katrina, this student makes distinctions between the internally displaced peoples of New Orleans and refugee groups from other parts of the world (see Smith, "There's No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster). Insiders, in this

case, are U.S. citizens, and being displacement by the hurricane did not change this aspect of their identity even though they were labeled by some as "refugees." The Lost Boys, however, are seen as "outsiders," not only by the different groups they encounter during their journey, but by U.S. readers as well.

Many of our class discussions overlooked Trinh's observations about identity, which are necessary for making sense of these insider/outsider subjectivities. I gave this student feedback on an earlier draft of this essay, asking him to consider relationships of power in the act of naming "who" is an insider or an outsider. I pointed him to the first line of Trinh's essay in which she states, "To raise the question of identity is to reopen again the discussion on the self/other relationship in its enactment of power relations" (215). When the student writes, "It is more complicated when we justify who can call the Lost Boys insiders or outsiders because we aren't a part of them or their natural culture, so who are we to give them labels," he seems to be trying to make this connection. In fact, when students used Trinh's work, even though they used it more than any other essay we read, they almost always ignored issues of power. The "inappropriate other" was seen as a kind of neutral or absolute image of someone "lost" between worlds. In that sense, the term fits neatly with an understanding of refugee identity as a non-citizen, but as Trinh explains, these issues of identity do not naturally exist in the world; they are tied to relationships of power.

We worked as a class, in discussion and in writing, on pushing this concept further, but it was hard to undo such a misleadingly fitting description of refugee identity. The discourses of power used by literacy sponsors, like the students in this class, shape their understandings of identity. While my impulse is not to critique students, they choose

to use such discourses in contradictory ways. Sometimes they worked to complicate their understandings, sometimes they used discourses of power to affirm what they already thought they knew about refugee identity. I see both happening in this student's writing. Even though the student above makes distinctions about refugees that names them as "outsiders," he grapples with the way categorizing the Lost Boys is a complicated issue that is dependent on the perspective of the those doing the labeling.

Identity continued to be a difficult concept for me to complicate with the class. When we failed to come to more complex understandings of identity, we ended up commodifying the refugee stories we read, making them recognizable to us according to familiar, dominant understandings of self, subject, and culture. One student produced a final project on Hmong refugee populations in Wisconsin and quoted a passage from Trinh's essay that discusses how identity has long been a notion that relies on the concept of an "essential, authentic core that remains hidden to one's consciousness" (215). The student attributed the idea of "authentic core" to Trinh rather than to the dominant perspective of society Trinh critiques:

> I believe that this idea of keeping true to ones "authentic self" is visible in the Hmong people in America just as it was in the Lost Boys … The idea that people coming to a different country will change eventually to fit in with their new surrounding can be seen not only in refugee populations, but also any person that is introduced to a culture unfamiliar to their own.

Trinh's arguments about identity and power are difficult to parse because they go against the dominant perspective of identity. Also, claiming a true "authentic core" could have a positive, stabilizing effect for refugees that is sometimes reproduced in published stories meant to appeal to a wide audience. Trinh's arguments are challenging for readers because they are an indictment of white, imperialist power that always views women and

people of color as "inappropriate." These were issues that we only tentatively unpacked in class, but since many of us benefited from such relationships of power, they were difficult to see let alone address.

I do not see these difficulties as a deterrent from using refugee narratives in a writing class. In fact, such stories, because they rely on complex understandings of identity, culture, and geographic context, are useful texts for asking students to make connections between themselves, local-global issues, and critical reading and writing practices. Because refugee experience has so many complicated and contradictory links to popular understandings of identity, it proves an important subject for analysis in a writing course.

Professional Development: Unlearning Discourses of Power

Considering the complications of my research, I think a curriculum that focuses on how discourses of power about refugee experience and the idea of "Africa" shape the literacy sponsorship should be a central component of teacher professional development. The scope of this development should include topics that address my research findings on discourse, context, and the ways refugee students and writers speak back to representations made of them. I propose we include three subjects for teacher-training in particular: historical context, or racism in the U.S. and the legacies of colonization in Africa especially in the form of the English language; testimony from new African immigrants and refugees; and exercises that allow space for sponsors to confront their own assumptions about refugees, Africa, and English literacy. In what follows, I offer up several specific suggestions regarding professional development materials as well as

questions we should ask when working with each other on literacy in global contexts.

Historical and Geographical Literacy

One thing that has been extremely helpful for me in working on my own assumptions as well as the assumptions of my students and fellow teachers, is to acknowledge how much we do not know about the contexts of Africa. I would start with geography. For example, PACA has several Africa-themed games and puzzles, and while these are designed for younger students, they can also pose a challenge for teachers. Simple puzzles that ask you to place Africa's countries in the right configuration can help us gain a basic understanding of where refugee students are coming from. Having knowledge of where things are can also show students that we care about their place in the world. Students are asked to do puzzles to learn where the different United States are located. The same should be true for sponsors. Studying the countries of Africa might provoke questions about how those nations came to be in their present state, when they declared independence, and what European countries colonized them, which then can raise questions about the indigenous and European languages spoken there.

The contexts of immigration and refugee resettlement can help sponsors understand the different ways in which students identify. Showing sponsors and students a documentary by Kobina Aidoo called *the Neo-African-Americans* can complicate some of what we take for granted about terms such as "African" and "African American." Aidoo explores the struggles African immigrants and refugees face as they try to establish a sense of community in the U.S. and the many ways they choose to self-identify in a society that constantly seeks to impose names and categories upon them.

How people choose to label themselves often conflicts with how people try to label each other, which is especially important to understand when those who label do so from positions of power or state authority.

Refugee Experience

Films about the Lost Boys of Sudan are also useful texts to consider. These include *POV: The Lost Boys of Sudan*, *God Grew Tired of Us* (featuring Jon Bul Dau), and *War Child*. *War Child* is especially eye-opening because it shows how Jal used music to reflect on his experience as a refugee and child soldier, and it also shows him returning to Sudan as he tries to make sense of his new life. Seeing these powerful and painful images can expose sponsors to imagery of refugee experience. I suggest resources that focus on the Lost Boys of Sudan because they are popular and easily accessible.

Additionally, the memoirs written by the Lost Boys are important texts to consider because they include more intimate perspectives. Some of these texts include books that were made into the above movies like *God Grew Tired of Us* and *War Child*, and using the book and film together might provoke sponsors to see some of the different rhetorical choices made in storytelling and editing. First-person narratives can be more critical than documentaries because the writers have the time and space to identify and question generalizations made about refugees in the films. Films can play up to our sense of charity, compassion, and pity, and memoirs allow the refugee writers to question and speak back to those discourses of power.

Sponsors can use texts written *about* the Lost Boys by both journalists and people who helped mentor and sponsor their resettlement in an exercise to identify racist

discourses of power. Books such as *The Journey of the Lost Boys* by Joan Hecht depict the African refugee as an object of pity, portraying them as backward, yet seeing those who sponsor them as selfless and charitable. The introduction to *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky* by Judy A. Bernstein also shows evidence of the ways sponsors describe and interact with resettled refugees. These authors often fail to reflect on the positions of privilege from which they speak. While it can be educational to read such texts critically, such reading poses challenges for an audience who might buy into the values of American exceptionalism and the idea of Africa as un-modern. I assign texts like these to my college writing students only after they have read critical, theoretical pieces on Africa and refugee experience.

As a college writing teacher, I often have education majors in my classes, and I have tried to include a section on Africa and the issues surrounding refugee resettlement in my courses on literacy. While I expect that the majority of my students will have less familiarity with these topics, I am surprised to hear my colleagues express similarly misinformed perspectives. I do not believe that we should learn about African immigrant and refugee experience merely to include these ideas in our growing "salad bowl" of multicultural education. Instead, it seems that learning more about these discourses of power helps us avoid comparing people and geographical regions in unfair and irresponsible ways. A sense of solidarity and an effort toward cross-cultural communication, must be worked toward in sponsor professional development but requires intensive introspection.

If we want to engage in the project of educating each other and our students about literacy in transnational contexts, then we should first direct that effort at our own

professional development. For instance, I continue to learn about my own racial and

linguistic privilege and my own investments in education from working in refugee

communities. Transnational composition values multilingual, multicultural philosophies

of teaching and not only seeks ways to reach students in more effective and responsible

ways, but also examines the local and global contexts of literacy-learning. This means a

critique of the systemic and structural inequality produced by the commodification of the

English language and the unidirectional sponsorship of U.S. brands of education.

The resilience of students like the Lost Boys of Sudan and my research

participants shows me that despite the institutional and political devaluation of their

experience, refugee students and writers continue to be dynamic, artful, and resistant.

When I was working with Dominic, he was committed to telling his own story in the

third person, writing passages such as,

> In the year 1988, Lost Boys start their school under the trees. Their classes
> were not yet built. The UNHCR also provided them with few books, pens,
> pencils and exercise books. Five pupils shared one book and two pupils
> shared one exercise book. They cut one exercise book in half so that one
> could use half for writing. Going to school was not their choice. Many of
> them used to miss class everyday.

Using an objective, research voice, Dominic describes the journey of the Lost Boys

through the facts summarized by popular magazine and newspaper articles, though some

of these observations would be mysteriously absent from the perspective of an outside

reader. Then, in the conclusion to his essay, Dominic writes,

> The cold weather of their new home challenged these guys. They had
> never experienced snow in their life. Suffering is a part of life. I the writer
> went through this terrible life. Painful suffering in human life will reward
> you if you tolerated it.

Dominic told me he wanted to surprise the reader, make the reader see the Lost Boys as

the articles did, and then reveal at the end that he, too, was one of their group, could call this experience his own. This is a valuable rhetorical strategy and an emotionally effective one for me as his reader. It was a strategy Dominic wanted to use. His writing center tutor had doubts at first, but Dominic convinced him it would be an effective essay if he kept his rhetorical structure in place, So, they focused on integrating his sources more clearly and addressed Dominic's lower-order, sentence-level concerns.

The ways in which literacy sponsorship is implicated in refugee resettlement are many and complex, and many questions remain unaddressed in this dissertation. For instance, what is it about the Lost Boys of Sudan specifically that has piqued American sympathies when other groups go unnoticed? What does the popularity of books like *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky* or *What is the What* tell us about our own consumption of narratives of human suffering? What about the other Lost Boys who did not qualify for resettlement because they "failed" to adequately tell their story? What about the South Sudanese youth who still attend English classes in refugee camps? The Lost Boys in the U.S. who continue to struggle? The utter lack of reporting on the Lost *Girls* of Sudan? What about those refugees from Somalia, on the other hand, who go to school in Milwaukee but attract little media attention or are seen as unassimilable? What makes the stories of the Lost Boys more "easily translated and shared" than others?

Literacy sponsorship needs to be complicated by stories that show how refugee students and writers have already acted as sponsors of their own literacy learning. How effective was I really in sponsoring Dominic's academic literacy? Was his essay better because of me? Did he, in turn, contribute to my own literacy-learning? Thinking of refugee students and writers as "emissaries of literacy" asks us to question our intentions

for being literacy sponsors, not to abandon the project, but to re-see it as a more dialogic endeavor rather than as a means for transforming the refugee subject into a productive, English-speaking citizen. Such a perspective is applicable to all instances of literacy sponsorship, but is most pronounced in circumstances when the sponsor and the sponsored have such drastically different life experiences.

Flat representations, one dimensional depictions, and stereotypical understandings of refugee students and writers, when reproduced, circulated, and consumed, no matter the intention, always serve the dominant class. These are often the limited discourses within which literacy sponsors work. Detail, rhetorical listening, contextual awareness, and careful attention to the stories refugee students tell, are necessary components for complicating and ultimately providing an alternative to current paradigms of sponsorship in which white, American, English-speaking sponsors uplift the purported helpless, backward, illiterate refugee. We cannot theorize or practice alternatives without their perspectives and participation. This is the work of the emissary. The sponsor's job is to support that work.

CODA: THE LOST BOYS OF SUDAN TWELVE YEARS LATER

On March 31ˢᵗ, CBS aired a *60 Minutes* segment called "The Lost Boys of Sudan: 12 Years Later." I watched, serendipitously, as I edited my dissertation before turning it in the next morning. I took notes to see how the show would describe the Lost Boys as adults. Sponsored by Pfizer pharmaceuticals, the *60 Minutes* episode merely replayed much of its previous segments on the Lost Boys, focusing intently on the Lost Boys' transition to U.S. "ways of life." Again and again, with disturbing fascination, the host described young Sudanese men who were being shown by U.S. sponsors how to eat airline food, how to turn on a faucet, and how to go grocery shopping.

People on the show called it, "the ultimate story of survival." Old white men exclaimed with pride how the Lost Boys traveled from nowhere to somewhere—from Kakuma refugee camp to JFK airport and beyond—how they knew "virtually nothing about the modern world." At some point, I had to stop taking notes. "Virtually nothing" in this *60 Minutes* story was new. Now thirty years old, these South Sudanese men were still called "boys" by a white journalist who acted the gracious host to a group of orphaned, African children. And, as one Sudanese man was shown to receive U.S. citizenship, the host beamed with delight at his conversion. "This is your first birth certificate?" The host asked. "The only papers you have are from America? Before that you had no documents at all?" Finally, the show let the Sudanese men tell their own story, and they talked about reunions with family they believed to be dead for the past decade. Even during these moments, the host espouses the magic and wonder of Skype as one man uses it to contact his mother.

Over the past twelve years, thousands of refugees have been resettled in the U.S., even amid a panicked increase in national security. The story of the Lost Boys of Sudan is still relevant. But, why? What is it about this group that speaks to the American public? While other groups of refugees are ignored—such as those in Milwaukee recently arrived from Burma, or derided as unassimilable, like those from Somalia—the group known as the Lost Boys of Sudan continues to be celebrated as ideal asylum seekers. Is it because they knew English before coming to the U.S.? The reasons are complex, but understanding the ways these kinds of stories have been told and retold helps me, as a literacy sponsor, reflect on at least my own participation in their circulation and consumption.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

<u>Aid Worker</u>

- How would you describe the goals of your organization?

- What are the most helpful resources you have drawn from in order to meet these goals?

- In your experience working with refugees in Milwaukee, how important do you see fluency in the English language being for refugees (in general) who have been recently resettled?

- How important is fluency in the English for refugee students in particular?

- What kinds of exposure to English have refugees typically had before they come to the U.S.? Is it spoken English, written, both?

- How would you describe the educational backgrounds of these students and/or refugees in general?

- What observations have you made about the differences between the spoken English literacy and the written English literacy of refugees?

<u>Tutor</u>

- What kind of training, preparation, or orientation did you have before you were placed in this program?

- What made you choose this organization as a place to fulfill your service-learning requirements? Or Work Study?

- What experiences have you had in the past that might have prepared you for this kind of work?

- What kinds of challenges do you face when tutoring students? Can you think of a specific example?

- How do you work through these challenges? Can you identify specific strategies that you use?

- What would you like more help with in your work with refugee students?

- What were your impressions of Africa before you started working here?

- How do you see yourself relating or not relating to the students you work with?

- When/if you describe this work to other people (friends, classmates, family, etc.), what are some of the things you say?

- Is there anything that I haven't asked about, any observations you've made, things you've noticed, that you think you'd like to draw my attention to?

Student

- How many languages would you say that you know? Do remember how you learned them? What was hard about learning them? What was easy?

- What is your favorite subject in school and why? What do you think you might want to do for a job?

- What do you like to read? Write? If you don't like to read or write, why? Do you write only in English or in other languages, too? If so, when and why?

- Do you remember when you first started to learn English? What was it like?

- How prepared did you feel when you started school in the U.S.?

- What kinds of English homework does your tutor help you with?

- Is there anything you would want more help with?

- What resources (books, for example) in the tutoring center do you use and what is helpful about them? What kinds of resources do you wish you had?

- How important do you think English is for going to college? Getting a job?

- How often do you speak English at home? With your family? With your friends? At school?

- How have you helped your parent/guardian with learning English? Have you helped anyone else? How? When you help someone, what works the best? What do you tell them?

- Has anyone at school, teachers or other students, ever discriminated against you because you were from Africa? What about the way you speak English?

- Has anyone said something positive about being from Africa?

- When you work with a tutor, or pick a tutor to work with, what do you like best about it? Or, how would you describe your favorite tutors?

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL LETTERS

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
UWMILWAUKEE

Department of University Safety & Assurances

Melissa Spadanuda
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New Study - Notice of IRB Expedited Approval

Date: February 28, 2011

To: Alice Gillam, PhD
Dept: English

Cc: Michael T. MacDonald, MA

IRB#: 11.226
Title: Emissaries of Literacy: Refugee Studies and Transnational Composition

After review of your research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board, your protocol has been approved as minimal risk Expedited under Category 6 and 7 as governed by 45 CFR 46.110.

This protocol has been approved on February 28, 2011 for one year. IRB approval will expire on February 27, 2012. If you plan to continue any research related activities (e.g., enrollment of subjects, study interventions, data analysis, etc.) past the date of IRB expiration, a continuation for IRB approval must be filed by the submission deadline. If the study is closed or completed before the IRB expiration date, please notify the IRB by completing and submitting the Continuing Review form found on the IRB website.

Unless specifically where the change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects, any proposed changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the IRB before implementation. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to adhere to the policies and guidelines set forth by the UWM IRB and maintain proper documentation of its records and promptly report to the IRB any adverse events which require reporting.

It is the principal investigator's responsibility to adhere to UWM and UW System Policies, and any applicable state and federal laws governing activities the principal investigator may seek to employ (e.g., FERPA, Radiation Safety, UWM Data Security, UW System policy on Prizes, Awards and Gifts, state gambling laws, etc.) which are independent of IRB review/approval.

Contact the IRB office if you have any further questions. Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes for a successful project.

Respectfully,

Melissa C. Spadanuda
IRB Administrator

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Continuing Review - Notice of IRB Expedited Approval

Date: February 24, 2012

To: Alice Gillam, PhD
Dept: English

Cc: Michael T. MacDonald, MA

IRB#:   11.226
Title: Emissaries of Literacy: Refugee Studies and Transnational Composition

After review of your research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board, your protocol has received continuing approval as minimal risk Expedited under category 6 & 7 as governed by 45 CFR 46.110.

This protocol has been approved on **February 24, 2012** for one year. IRB approval will expire on **February 23, 2013**. If you plan to continue any research related activities (e.g., enrollment of subjects, study interventions, data analysis, etc.) past the date of IRB expiration, a Continuation for IRB Approval must be filed by the submission deadline. If the study is closed or completed before the IRB expiration date, please notify the IRB by completing and submitting the Continuing Review form found on the IRB website.

Unless specifically where the change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects, any proposed changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the IRB before implementation. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to adhere to the policies and guidelines set forth by the UWM IRB and maintain proper documentation of its records and promptly report to the IRB any adverse events which require reporting.

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Contact the IRB office if you have any further questions. Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes for a successful project.

Respectfully,

Benjamin J. Kennedy
IRB Manager
CC: Study File

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