

Diverse by Design: Literacy Education within Multicultural Institutions, by Christopher Schroeder. Logan: Utah State UP, 2011. 236 pp.

Reviewed by Mathew Gomes, California State University

In his previous book, *ReInventing the University*, Christopher Schroeder questioned the usefulness of academic literacy, traditionally conceived, and of the implications that teaching such a literacy might have for students. Schroeder continues this line of interrogation in his new book, *Diverse by Design*, a valuable contribution to the growing body of scholarship seeking to redefine academic discourse. *Diverse by Design* is an institutional case study of Schroeder's own university, Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), which touts itself as "The Most Ethnically Diverse University in the Midwest" (xvii, 33-35). This multigenre and multivocal account of literacy at NEIU offers a rich and complex investigation of this claim, and reveals deeply-entrenched philosophies and language practices that, even despite best intentions, may work to perpetuate exclusion and undermine nominal commitments to diversity and "multicultural education." The book is in three parts, the first of which juxtaposes this institutional agenda alongside patterns of exclusion at NEIU. The school's ethnolinguistic diversity allows Schroeder, in the second part, to examine the university's claim on one specific front, which he does by foregrounding the effects of students' encounters with literacy on the campus of NEIU. While the university claims to support its diverse student population, a look at these effects reveals a tension central to Schroeder's criticism: the university benefits from being able to claim to offer a "multicultural education," but is not doing enough to justify this claim, and specifically, could be doing more to promote multicultural literacies. In part three Schroeder offers recommendations for making literacy instruction at NEIU more consonant with its claim to promote a multicultural education.

Schroeder provides a useful context for understanding this apparent contradiction by focusing on the history the school uses to justify its claim as promoting a multicultural education. The university finds support for this claim in its designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Maintaining this title benefits NEIU in at least two ways: on the one hand, the HSI designation allows it to apply for Title V funds reserved for such institutions; on the other, the HSI designation is a linchpin of the university's self-proclaimed multicultural identity, which the school has invested in heavily. Schroeder also describes a long tradition within NEIU of preparing teachers for the Chicago Public Schools system, a system which has become increasingly racially segregated. Even while NEIU is in, arguably, one of the strongest positions to affect the local conditions of education, students coming out of the CPS system into NEIU tend to struggle disproportionately. Schroeder is quick to point out the sad irony of this situation, which amounts to a failure

on the part of NEIU to articulate a full curricular commitment to diversity. Honing in on this contradiction, Schroeder argues that efforts to develop a multicultural curriculum at NEIU have almost entirely ignored issues of language and literacy, and the ethnolinguistic dimensions of its racially diverse campus.

This failure is reflected in the everyday experiences of literacy on the NEIU campus, which Schroeder attempts to sketch out in part 2. Schroeder first focuses on one specific academic support program geared toward the Hispanic population at NEIU, Proyecto Pa'Lante (PP). This program is designed to offer admissions to Hispanic applicants at NEIU who do not qualify for general admission. However, using data following students in PP over four years, Schroeder demonstrates that there are significant gaps in the reality of the "support" these students have. For example, after their first year in school, PP students tended to earn fewer credits and lower grades, and had lower retention rates than their peers. Further, most students in the program were placed into remedial reading and writing courses, which required completing an additional two courses before moving on to required introductory writing classes. Even while most PP students did not consider English their primary language, placement into these courses was determined by students' performances on standardized tests only offered in English. Beyond introductory writing classrooms, NEIU requires students to take an English Competency Examination, which students in PP disproportionately did not pass. Schroeder effectively shows how, at multiple points, literacy practices and policies at NEIU work against PP students.

Schroeder develops his accounts of literacy experiences of the Hispanic population at NEIU by including several chapters which take the form of personal narratives. One chapter is co-authored with an instructor for PP students, who teaches an introductory course designed to help them adjust to the university. Two other chapters are authored by students at NEIU, one graduate student and one undergraduate student who was unable to complete a section of the introductory writing sequence, taught by Schroeder. Together, these chapters constitute a mosaic of stories which explore the different ways multilingual students and instructors at NEIU have attempted to negotiate the curricular demands of the university, which, in terms of the diversity of literacy practices these students exhibit, still seems to serve a singularly repressive function. These narratives also lend credibility to Schroeder's overarching argument that universities should be more attuned to local experiences of literacy by showing the ways the university's notions of literacy cannot accommodate the very different literacy practices each of these members of the university possesses.

In part 3, Schroeder presents the all-too-predictable conclusion of his case study: philosophies about literacy at NEIU, as well as language policies embedded at a curricular level, constitute a form of institutionalized 'color-blind' racism, which "discriminate against the very ethnic diversity institutions and disciplines seek to value" (206). In multiple ways, these attitudes and

practices reproduce a Standard English Ideology, a system of linguistic values which promotes monolingualism, particularly a (hypothetical) unmarked or “standard” variety of English. This ideology authorizes the reproduction of an ethnolinguistically-distributed discrimination. Language policies created within this framework are characteristically assimilationist, demanding that students conform linguistically to a white, middle-class English (198-199). This attitude toward literacy, Schroeder notes, is diffuse, and is one that is promoted nationally. In the end, Schroeder’s answer is simple: change our literacy standards. More than this, these standards need to articulate literacies as situated and locally-meaningful, and they need to be implemented at a wide curricular level. Specifically, this implementation should occur with a *pluralist integration* approach, which both acknowledges the dominance and power of certain “standardized” English practices while also emphasizing the intellectual possibilities that a truly diverse and multilingual academic community can provide. The book concludes with an afterword from Victor Villanueva, who calls for more voices from the field of contrastive rhetoric to contribute to Schroeder’s discussion, whose voices might be particularly useful because they reveal the conventions of “good writing” required by the academy as also culturally-bound.

The changes Schroeder suggests are easier said than done, however, and I appreciate that this difficulty is one Schroeder recognizes. Interspersed between chapters are autobiographical accounts in which Schroeder addresses his own encounters with literacy standards, his own efforts to interrogate or change these standards, and his own shortcomings. When NEIU receives HSI funds for a campus-wide writing program and subsequently revises its first-year writing curriculum, for example, he is unable to participate directly in crafting this new curriculum, which, on the one hand, clarifies programmatic outcomes but, on the other, also seems to promote the Standard English Ideology that Schroeder criticizes. His overall argument is nuanced by these admissions, and it is one which, again, prompts me to reflect on the effects of what I am (not) teaching.

Schroeder’s book leaves me here, with the question of how to deal with the practical implementation of “multilingualism and multiliteracies,” and the effects of this sort of literacy instruction within the larger landscape of literacy practices. The concept is valuable for me because I find myself in a similar position as Schroeder: Like NEIU, my school, California State University, Fresno, is an HSI, and it also has a reputation for serving historically underrepresented student populations. The questions that Schroeder is asking of his university are ones that I might also be asking of mine: In what ways does my own university claim (and perhaps fail) to provide meaningful support for its own diverse student population? And, the questions his text raises for me are also pedagogical: How might my own instruction contribute to encounters with literacy for students in my classroom? And, what potential effects might this instruction have beyond my classroom, within the context of literacy philosophies and practices across the university, and outside of it?

Transforming the conditions and lasting effects of racism will require more than catchy slogans, and ultimately, Schroeder provides a convincing analysis of how ostensibly multicultural curricula can continue to reproduce tacitly racist educations. Schroeder's critique is important for compositionists and writing instructors who are interested in rethinking literacy instruction, especially those on diverse campuses like NEIU and my own. In particular, *Diverse by Design* argues that literacy has an important role to play in creating more authentic multicultural curricula, and provokes questions about the specific roles they might play in creating such an education.

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Reinventing Identities in Second Language Writing, edited by Michelle Cox, Jay Jordan, Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, and Gwen Gray Schwartz. Urbana: NCTE Press, 2010. 342 pp.

Reviewed by Todd Ruecker, University of Texas

Over the last several years, second language (L2) writing scholars have turned their attention to identity issues surrounding multilingual writers in US academic institutions. These discussions have focused on areas such as the problems and limits associated with linguistic identity labels like ESL and non-native speaker, the ways that monolingual ideologies present in US academic systems work to devalue students' diverse linguistic backgrounds and even erase their identities, and how linguistic identities are constantly shifting as students cross discourse communities and academic contexts. Having grappled with questions of identity and L2 writers in their research, the editors of *Reinventing Identities in Second Language Writing* came together to create a collection that would "broaden the discussion of identity and second language writing across a variety of institutional contexts" (ix). The result is a truly valuable work for anyone interested in identity issues surrounding second language writers. Understanding that identity is complex, fluid, and multiple, the editors of this collection assembled chapters on a varied set of topics from a diverse group of voices, ranging from established scholars to graduate students. By examining identity from different perspectives, institutional positions, and geographical locations, the contributors to this collection help the reader gain a new perspective on the complexities surrounding identity in L2 writing.

The first section of this collection focuses on identity formation in a variety of contexts, including high school, college, graduate school, and workplaces. In the first chapter, Christina Ortmeier-Hooper draws on social identity theory and case studies of three students to examine the identities of L2 writers in a high school and the role that institutional labels play in