

# Comedy Stages, Poets Projects, Sports Columns, and Kinesiology 341: Illuminating the Importance of Basic Writers' Self-Sponsored Literacies

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*ABSTRACT: Dominant perspectives of basic writers' self-sponsored literacies tend to overlook the important roles such activities can play in literate development. Drawn from texts, interviews, and participant-observations collected during a five-year study, this article continues the examination of the relationship between one writer's curricular and extracurricular engagements begun in "Journalism, Poetry, Stand-Up Comedy, and Academic Literacy: Mapping the Interplay of Curricular and Extracurricular Literate Activities," which appeared in JBW 27.1. This article examines the writing-related knowledge the writer gained from extracurricular engagements with stand-up comedy, poetry, and sports journalism and argues that he draws upon this knowledge to enhance his performance in a writing-intensive upper-division kinesiology class. Based on my analysis of these "laminated" literacies, I argue for a perspective of basic writers' self-sponsored literate activities that acknowledges the positive contributions they can make to learners' academic engagements and to their literate lives more broadly.*

*KEYWORDS: self-sponsored literacies; academic writing; lamination; literate development; intertextuality*

In "The Contributions of North American Longitudinal Studies of Writing in Higher Education to Our Understanding of Writing Development," Paul Rogers lists a wealth of factors that inform students' growth as writers throughout their college years, including their cultural backgrounds, mentoring from professors, opportunities to write, teacher supportiveness, feedback from teachers and peers, and their lives outside of school (375). As a field, basic writing has paid close and careful attention to the impact of various factors on students' uptake of academic literacy. These factors

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include their cultural backgrounds (Lu, “From Silence to Words”; Gilyard; Smitherman), chances to write in and across a variety of genres and audiences (Adler-Kassner; Arca; Gabor; Pine), supportive instructors and instruction (Hull and Rose; Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*; Shaughnessy, “Diving In,” *Errors and Expectations*), and employment and family obligations outside of the university (Sternglass). Rogers’s list also includes students’ pre-existing writing abilities (375), but this factor has received significantly less attention in the basic writing literature. While a handful of studies do offer glimpses of basic writers’ literate lives outside of school (Courage; Hull, Rose, Frazer, and Castellano; Mutnick; Sternglass), that body of work has tended to understand self-sponsored (Gere 80) and school-sponsored literacies as separate streams of literate activity. By not fully attending to basic writers’ self-sponsored literacies and their potential contributions to the students’ academic writing, we reduce the scope of their literate lives and identities as literate persons to only what we see in their work for college courses. As a result, our judgments about their literate abilities come to be based solely on their academic performances. By overlooking self-sponsored literacies, we also subtly but powerfully signal that such writing is not “real writing” and that such reading is not “real reading.”

My initial contribution to the examination of basic writers’ experiences with writing outside of school, published in the spring 2008 issue of *JBW*, drew from a longitudinal case study of Charles Scott, Jr., an African-American basic writer enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to situate Charles’s writing for his university courses within the larger literate landscape he inhabited, that study examined his school- and self-sponsored literate activities and also reached back to his literate engagements prior to attending the university. Using sample texts, interview excerpts, and notes from participant observation of Charles’s writing activities, the analysis I offered in “Journalism, Poetry, Stand-Up Comedy, and Academic Literacy: Mapping the Interplay of Curricular and Extracurricular Literate Activities” illuminated not only his extensive participation with stand-up comedy, poetry, and extracurricular journalism, but also the creative and purposeful ways he drew upon those engagements to enhance his performance in two introductory courses he took during his first semester of college: Rhetoric 101 and Speech Communication 101. To accomplish the analytical writing tasks for Rhetoric 101 (a credit-bearing basic writing course), Charles drew upon practices developed from his earlier experiences with researching and writing news stories for *New Expression*, a news magazine run by Chicago area teens. Likewise, to succeed in Speech 101, Charles redeployed practices

he had developed while performing stand-up comedy routines and giving public readings of his poetry. The dense “nexus of practice” (Scollon 16) linking school and non-school activities that emerged from that analysis prompted me to argue that “understanding Charles’s development as an academic speaker or writer means taking into account his experiences with non-school journalism, poetry, and stand-up comedy as well as Rhetoric 101 and Speech 101 and how such engagements motivate, facilitate, and invigorate one another” (27).

In this article, I extend the analysis of the relationship between Charles’s school- and self-sponsored literacies in three key directions. First, rather than focusing on Charles’s experiences in introductory courses, this analysis attends to his performance in a writing-intensive upper-division class in kinesiology. Second, whereas my previous analysis emphasized Charles’s writing and speaking, the present one also addresses his abilities to engage with texts as a reader. Third, rather than examining the ways that his multiple literate engagements are linked via the repurposing of practice, the analysis offered here explores how Charles redeploys the discourses animating his sports journalism, comedy routines, and poetry into the critiques he’s asked to produce for the kinesiology class. I argue that Charles’s success in Kinesiology 341 is due in large part to the crucial connections he forged between the reading and writing for that course and his far-flung network of self-sponsored literate engagements, including his stand-up comedy routines, poetry, and sports journalism stories. Further, I use Charles’s successes in drawing upon these self-sponsored literacies to argue for a more nuanced and productive perspective of basic writers’ self-sponsored writing. In addition to providing a look at a so-called basic writer navigating the literate demands of an upper-division undergraduate course, this article contributes to basic writing scholarship in a number of ways. By devoting sustained attention to one student’s multiple non-school writings, particularly genres such as stand-up comedy and journalism that have not been addressed by previous scholarship, this article extends accounts of basic writers’ self-sponsored literacies. In addition, it theorizes and empirically maps the dialogic connections between academic and self-sponsored literacies rather than viewing them as discrete activities. In doing so, it contributes to the development of theoretical and methodological approaches that not only make visible the expansive intertextual and interdiscursive pathways connecting students’ multiple literate engagements, but it also views the development of academic writing and reading abilities in relation to, rather than as separate from, other literacies.

## LEARNING TO VALUE BASIC WRITERS' MULTIPLE LITERACIES

As Bruce Horner notes in “Relocating Basic Writing,” BW scholarship has long recognized the wealth of “additional” resources and experiences that basic writers bring to the university from their families and communities (56). By far, the majority of that research has focused on the rich diversity of languages and language varieties, particularly national languages and varieties of English, that basic writers have at their disposal (Canagarajah; Gilyard; Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur; Lu, “From Silence to Words”; McCrary; Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy”; Smitherman). Informed by such a perspective, the field has come to recognize that even those basic writers who speak only English “are nonetheless multilingual in the varieties of English they use and in their ability to adapt English to their needs and desires” (Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur 311). In addition to helping us recognize the rich variety of languages and language varieties our students possess, that scholarship has also helped us to view linguistic diversity as a resource upon which basic writers can and do draw, rather than as a hurdle they need to overcome, as they navigate the demands of their coursework. In short, our understanding of basic writers’ multiple languages and language varieties as resources for meeting academic demands is informed by what Horner describes as a “traffic model of linguistic heterogeneity” (“Relocating Basic Writing” 59). In such a model, persons are continually meshing together the multiple linguistic resources they carry from their multiple engagements. The discourse at play for any given activity is informed by the linguistic forms found at that location as well as those brought from other locales. In other words, persons do not set one language variety aside for another as they move from setting to setting, but rather they continually blend their various language varieties together as they move across contexts.

In contrast to the wealth of scholarship that has examined basic writers’ linguistic resources, research on their multifaceted engagements with literacy as a resource for their academic pursuits has been slower to emerge. What we know of basic writers’ self-sponsored literacies arises from a handful of studies that have glimpsed students’ literate lives beyond the classroom. In “The Interaction of Public and Private Literacies,” Richard Courage briefly describes the letters, notes, forms, and shopping lists written by Ethel, an adult community college student enrolled in a basic writing class. In “Remediation as a Social Construct: Perspectives from an Analysis of Classroom Discourse,” Glynda Hull, Mike Rose, Kay Fraser, and Marisa Castellano mention the short stories and the romance novel written by Maria, a basic

writer in an undergraduate composition class. In *Writing in an Alien World*, Deborah Mutnick offers a more detailed portrait of two science fiction novels written by Joe Baxter, a basic writer participating in her research. Although not focused exclusively on basic writers, Marilyn Sternglass’s *Time to Know Them* describes the poetry, short stories, and novels written by Jacob, one of the participants in her longitudinal study of CUNY (City University of New York) students.

Not only has scholarship addressing basic writers’ additional literacies been slower to emerge, but the relationship between those literate activities and students’ academic writing remains grounded in what Horner describes as an “archipelago model” (57). Like the “traffic” model, the “archipelago” model acknowledges and accounts for the rich variety of resources persons have in their repertoires; however, rather than depicting those resources as being carried from one site to another and blended together, the archipelago model assigns each resource to an appropriate sphere of use and depicts those spheres as discrete, autonomous islands. Rather than meshing together language practices from different spheres, persons are depicted as trading in one set of practices for another as they move out of one locale and into another. In keeping with this archipelago model, studies of basic writers have recognized the kinds of writing they do outside of school, but at the same time they have tended to overlook the possibility that such literacies might flow into and influence students’ academic writing. Describing the relationship between Ethel’s engagements with out-of-school writing—for example, letters, notes, shopping lists, and so on—and the writing she encounters in her classes, Courage comments that her “private literacy had few points of congruence with the public literacy of the schools” (488). Likewise, Hull, Rose, Fraser, and Castellano observe that Maria’s teacher applauds her for having written a novel, but at the same time they note that “she devalues Maria’s extra-institutional literacy activity and negates the possibility that she could learn things about literacy from it” (315). The teachers in Mutnick’s study admire Joe Baxter’s investment in his novels, and his talent prompts them to wonder why he was placed in basic writing, but they still regard his self-sponsored writing as separate from the essays he writes for his BW class. In much the same manner, Sternglass repeatedly celebrates Jacob’s passionate commitment to his poetry, short stories, and novels and states how privileged she felt to talk with him about his creative writing, and yet her account depicts Jacob’s self-sponsored literacies as running along a parallel path with his academic literacies, as discrete, autonomous writing activities.

## WRITING AND READING AS LAMINATED LITERATE ACTIVITY

In my earlier analysis of the relationship between Charles's school and non-school writing, I employed a theoretical framework informed by Vygotskian activity theory and Mediated Discourse Theory. This framework understood social action as being mediated by what Ron Scollon refers to as a "nexus of practice" (16), a network woven from some practices that are local and unique to a particular social setting and others that have been spun-off from other sites of engagement. Understood from this perspective, social action is both situated in a particular setting and across a far-flung network of practice that stretches into other activities. This perspective highlighted the textual practices linking Charles's activities for two introductory courses with his stand-up comedy, poetry, and extracurricular journalism. To accomplish the analytical writing tasks for his Rhetoric 101 class, Charles drew upon practices developed from his earlier experiences with researching and writing news stories. Likewise, to succeed at the speeches required for his Speech 101 course, Charles redeployed practices developed while performing stand-up comedy routines and giving readings of his poetry.

That analysis of the connections between Charles's school and non-school writings suggested that his multiple literate engagements might be linked in ways that a focus on nexus of practice could obscure. In "Chronotopic Lamination: Tracing the Contours of Literate Activity," Paul Prior and Jody Shipka forward the notion of "chronotopic lamination" as a means of accounting for not only networks of practices but also "the dispersed, fluid chains of places, times, people, and artifacts that come to be tied together in trajectories of literate action along with the ways multiple activity footings are held and managed" (181). Their notion of "chronotopic lamination" is drawn from Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the "chronotopic" nature of language—that language is embodied in actual concrete times, places, and events of life and in representations of those actual times, places, and events on paper, in talk, and in the mind—and Erving Goffman's notion of lamination—that multiple activities co-exist, are immanent, in any situation. Weaving these two constructs together, Prior and Shipka offer "chronotopic lamination" as a way to address "the multiplicity of embodied-and-representational chronotopes that are encompassed in any literate act" (183). As an example, Prior and Shipka trace the network of literate activities that animate the act of reading a newspaper. Such an act, they write,

is both localized in the concrete acts, thoughts, and feelings of the reader(s) and sociohistorically dispersed across a far-flung chronotopic network—including the embodied acts of writing the story, almost certainly spread across multiple chronotopic episodes of individual and collaborative composing; the histories of journalism and the genre of the news story; the actual embodied worlds being represented and their textualized representations; the reader's histories of reading papers and of earlier events relevant to those represented in the story; and so on. (186-87)

When viewed as chronotopically laminated, the seemingly discrete act of reading a news story is part of an extensive network of literate activities that includes the history of the particular story, news stories as a genre, and journalism as a literate activity; the concrete times and places being addressed in the story and previous representations of those times and places; and the writer and readers' histories of engagement with newspapers and other texts. In other words, a full and rich accounting of what reading and writing entail demands that researchers understand literate acts as concrete and local even as they are dispersed across, and thus laminated with, other literate engagements.

According to Prior and Shipka, the laminated quality of literate activity arises from the fact that multiple activities are "co-developing," that elements from one domain are "always developing in association with other activities, actions, and artifacts" (207) no matter how different or disconnected those activities might seem. In other words, if literate acts are not autonomous islands but rather complexly connected to other acts associated with other social worlds, then understanding literate development demands that we consider the ways that any focal activity is developing in conjunction with, rather than apart from, other activities.

## CHARLES'S EXPERIENCES IN KINESIOLOGY 341: A STUDY OF LAMINATED LITERACY

Approaching Charles's writing for his later papers in Kinesiology 341 as part of a chronotopic network of texts, artifacts, persons, places, and times stretching into other engagements prompted me to look beyond elements of Charles's kinesiology class that might account for his ultimate success in that course. Below, I offer a closer look at Charles's first and second essays for this class. I then partially trace the network of Charles's literate engagements,

including his stand-up comedy, poetry, and sports journalism, that appear to be informing his second essay and subsequent ones as well.

In her 1996 book, Deborah Mutnick uses the phrase “writing in an alien world” to describe basic writers’ reactions to finding themselves in a world “dominated by the strange language of academic discourse” (100). This is an apt description for what Charles Scott, Jr., felt as a basic writer enrolled in Kinesiology 341: Games in Culture, a writing-intensive, upper-division course he took during his freshman year at the university. Although he had not yet completed any of the prerequisites, or even the second of the two-course freshman rhetoric sequence required for entering students with the lowest scores on the university’s placement exam, Charles had been granted permission to take the course, which explored game phenomena as cultural action systems.<sup>2</sup> During one of our interviews that semester, Charles mentioned that he was shocked to discover that the majority of students enrolled were upper-level undergraduates and graduate students. Recalling his initial reaction to this course, Charles said, “I was really intimidated when I found out that I was the only freshman, and everyone else had taken a lot of kinesiology classes.”

### **The First Essay**

When Charles encountered the first of the course’s five major writing tasks, each requiring a lengthy critique of a book that addressed professional and amateur sports and their relationship to larger social and cultural contexts, his initial anxiety increased. Scholarship on basic writers has elaborated students’ struggles with the literate demands of introductory composition courses, which often require learners to read article-length pieces and write relatively brief essays or sometimes even shorter paragraph-length pieces. The lengthy and dense texts at the center of Kinesiology 341, designed to challenge the literate abilities of juniors, seniors, and graduate students, would certainly require Charles to stretch, as both a reader and writer, in ways not usually assumed easy for basic writers.

Charles’s struggle with the kinds of texts he was asked to read and write was apparent in the first essay he wrote for the class. Rather than offering a critique of the core arguments of the assigned book, Bernard Suits’s *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia*, Charles’s first paper consisted mainly of a chapter-by-chapter summary of the book’s content. In the two instances where Charles moved beyond summary, he did so merely by stating that he agreed with Suits’s assertions and then provided a brief example from

his own experience with sports as support. I offer here an excerpt of one of those instances, taken from Charles’s discussion of Suits’s third chapter:<sup>3</sup>

Suits believes that the rules of the game has a direct effect on the quality of the game. I agree with Suits. The rules of a particular game can break or make a game. Suits says if rules are defined too “loosely” the game would be boring because winning would be too easy. Suits says the less rules a game has, the more it falls apart. He also believes that without rules, we wouldn’t be able to play the games we play. Example of a game without rules is a football video game called NFL Blitz. If the real NFL were without rules, there would be no more football. Because all the players would be dead because they killed each other.

In an effort to move beyond just summarizing Suits’s point about the important role and function of rules, Charles states that he agrees with the author. A few sentences later, he offers the *NFL Blitz* video game as an example of a game with few rules, and makes the point that adopting this approach in the “real NFL” would cause the league to fall apart because the rules designed to protect the players would not exist.

In responding to Charles’s essay, on which he received a grade of C-, the professor focused the vast majority of her in-text and marginal comments on issues of verb tense, missing words, sentence clarity, and paragraph structure. Her other comments were aimed at encouraging Charles to read Suits’s text more carefully, pointing to specific pages for him to re-read. In her brief end comment, the professor wrote, “[y]ou covered all the main points,” but then echoed her earlier comments about the mechanical aspects of Charles’s writing by stating, “[b]e very cautious of errors in sentence structure.”

### **The Second Essay**

Although Charles struggled with the initial paper for Kinesiology 341, his response to the second assignment marked a clear turning point in his performance in the course. In this paper, students were asked to critique Charles Springwood’s *Cooperstown to Dyersville: A Geography of Baseball Nostalgia*, an ethnographic study of professional baseball. Compared with Charles’s first essay, his second one read much more like a critique than a summary, especially in terms of the ways in which Charles extended, complicated, and even challenged some of Springwood’s key points with his own insights.

In one of the essay's paragraphs, for example, Charles works to refine Springwood's point about "ballpark nostalgia." Charles opens this paragraph with a quotation from Springwood about the sense of loss baseball fans felt as their beloved stadiums moved out of urban neighborhoods. He then references Springwood's example of the Chicago Cubs' Wrigley Field as one of the few parks in close proximity to the city. Having established Springwood's point regarding fans' nostalgia for ballparks as the focal topic of discussion, Charles then offers examples from his own home team by mentioning White Sox fans' displeasure with "New" Comiskey Park, pointing particularly to its industrial look and enormous upper deck:

The White Sox have had this problem because fans don't like the New Comiskey Park because the stadium lacks character plus the upper deck. Families grow up with certain stadiums, and when the time comes to replace their stadium, they have a hard time letting go. Fans like the classic stadiums because those are the stadiums they identify with. It takes lots of time to identify with new stadiums.

Whereas Springwood identified the loss of connection to city neighborhoods as the source of baseball fans' nostalgia, Charles locates it in the loss of the classic styling associated with the stadiums that fans grew up with. Charles's point is not as developed as it could be, but I read his decision to introduce the example of Comiskey Park as a way to refine Springwood's point about the source of "ballpark nostalgia." By using Comiskey Park in this manner, Charles is able to move away from merely summarizing Springwood's point as he approximates the critique that his professor is expecting.

In the next paragraph, Charles turns his attention to a section of Springwood's book that discusses professional baseball's racial problems. Rather than employing his insights about the White Sox to subtly refine Springwood's point, as he had done in the previous paragraph, this time Charles draws upon the Sox to productively contest Springwood's position. Charles opens the paragraph by presenting readers with what he saw as Springwood's central assertion that baseball's Hall of Fame functioned to isolate racial inequalities in the sport's past and thus erase racial issues in the present. In the next sentence, however, Charles directly contests Springwood's position by proclaiming that "the refusal to hire minority coaches and general managers" is "a major problem [that] exists in baseball today." In doing so, Charles positions racial inequalities as a crucial issue in need of urgent attention rather than one that has been adequately addressed and

thus comfortably relegated to the sport's history. As evidence to support his assertion, Charles points to the scant few African-American managers in contemporary baseball, adding that all three have winning records as a way to underscore that race, rather than coaching ability, is the central reason for the low number of Black managers:

Currently there are only three African-American managers in baseball, ironically all three have winning career records. And the best two teams in each respected league had a Black manager last season. Two of the three Black managers manage in Chicago. The Cubs and White Sox both have African-American managers. This season the White Sox also hired an African-American General Manager, making the White Sox the only organization in sports history to have a minority General Manager and Coach.

Closing the paragraph, Charles writes, "Yes, baseball is making progress towards equality, but problems still exist, which can only be corrected with time." In this final sentence, Charles makes clear his position with respect to Springwood's: while agreeing that baseball shows signs of moving beyond its racial problems, he also insists that such problems still exist and need to be addressed as the sport moves forward.

The professor's comments on Charles's second paper, as for his initial essay, are directed toward sentence-level and mechanical issues. However, this time, the professor also offers a number of positive comments. In her marginal comments, for example, she praises Charles for addressing a number of Springwood's key points. She also repeatedly applauds Charles's effective use of examples, writing "excellent example" and "great use of examples" in the margins of his paper and indicating multiple instances where she thought Springwood would agree with Charles's assertions. In addition, rather than focusing solely on Charles's problems with the more mechanical aspects of his prose, the professor also encourages Charles to address even more directly the cultural theory they are studying in class in order to provide a more focused critique and a tighter argument.

Charles's second critique for Kinesiology 341 is of interest for a number of reasons. First, as a reader, I was struck by the depth of Charles's engagement with Springwood's book compared with his response to the book for his initial assignment. In addition, this essay marked the first time that Charles's efforts at critique were seen as somewhat successful by the professor. Of greater interest, though, is how that success might be due in large

part to Charles drawing upon discourses of professional baseball, and the Chicago White Sox and Comiskey Park in particular, and racial tensions in professional sports, both of which are topics he frequently addressed in his various self-sponsored literate activities. In the sections that follow, I examine an expanding intertextual and interdiscursive network linking Charles's second essay for the kinesiology course to three of his self-sponsored literate engagements: stand-up comedy routines that he performed while enrolled in the kinesiology class, poetry that he wrote some eight months before taking this course, and sports journalism stories he wrote almost a year earlier.

### Stand-Up Comedy

Charles's repertoire of self-sponsored literacies included the stand-up comedy routines he performed once a month throughout his first year and a half at the university's monthly Open Mic Night and other university-sponsored venues. Charles began to perform these stand-up routines primarily as a way to get some experience speaking in front of an audience in order to bolster his poor grades in Speech Communication 101, which he took during his first semester. His comedy routine included a rich blend of impersonations, one-liners, humorous experiences, and his own observations about life's twists and turns (see Roozen, "Journalism, Poetry, Stand-Up Comedy" for a fuller description of the origins of Charles's stand-up comedy routine, as well as the origins of his poetry and journalism that I mention in the next two sections). Once a month, Charles took the stage with fifteen or so new pages of material he had written in his red, spiral-bound "joke notebook." He looked for material as he watched his favorite shows like *ESPN SportsCenter*, *Saturday Night Live*, and *The Daily Show*, read a number of newspapers, browsed the joke pages of magazines like *Playboy* and *Maxim*, collected visual texts posted around his residence hall, scanned through humorous e-mails his older sisters had sent him, and reflected on his own experiences.

Describing the key premise underlying stand-up comedy, Betsy Borns writes that "in order to make humor, it's necessary to point out 'what's wrong with this picture'" (52), something Charles was able to achieve through his focus on the provocative topics of sports and race. With their less than stellar ratio of wins to losses and declining attendance at home games, the White Sox were the focal point for much of his comedy. The Sox's home stadium, Comiskey Park, was also a frequent target of Charles's jokes, particularly its need for renovation even though it had been largely rebuilt in the early 1990s.



**Figure 1.** Excerpts from Charles's joke notebook

The image at the top of Figure 1 depicts just one of the many notes from Charles's joke notebook that reference Comiskey Park. Using this note to prompt his memory, Charles would interrupt one of his longer bits by interjecting, "ESPN breaking news, Comiskey Park becomes the first sports stadium to be renovated in less than ten years of being rebuilt" in the voice of Harry Caray or some other sports announcer. During some performances, he would follow this bit with additional quick jabs at the intelligence of the architects behind the park's renovations. At other times, Charles would use his observations of Comiskey Park to move into comments about the Sox's losses, trades, management decisions, and players.

Issues of race also figured largely in Charles's stand-up comedy and provided another fitting topic for pointing out "what's wrong with this picture." For example, as part of a lengthy bit about political figures' responses to the 2000 presidential election results, including those of Al Gore and George W. Bush, Charles incorporated a smaller bit spoofing Jesse Jackson's charges that the GOP had intimidated Black voters and neglected to count Black votes (the note for which appears in the middle of Figure 1). Other bits addressing race frequently took the form of observations about

differences between social practices of Blacks and Whites (e.g., differences in the parties they throw, the offices of Black and White businesses, etc.), including a short bit about Blacks' and Whites' reactions to the shootings at Columbine High School (the note for which appears at the bottom of Figure 1). Charles also occasionally used his own experiences at the university as fodder for his routine. One bit that appeared in many of his shows focused on an experience at the university's required seminar on date rape. Because he showed up a bit late to the session, Charles did not know that the leaders had temporarily separated the male and female students, and he wound up with the females rather than the males. In recounting this experience for his routine, Charles noted his surprise at finding himself as the only male in the group of females, and then stated, "Why am I the only male student who had to attend? Is it because I'm Black?"

### Poetry

Stand-up comedy was not the only self-sponsored literacy in which Charles examined Comiskey Park and issues of race; he also addressed both topics in his poetry. While working at *New Expression*, a news magazine authored and produced by students attending Chicago-area high schools, Charles and the magazine's poetry editor established The People's Poets Project, with Charles serving as president and editor. By combining their own poems with those they elicited from other Chicago-area teens, Charles and the poetry editor published the Project's first book, titled *Days of Our Lives*, in August of 1999. After selling two hundred copies of this book, the pair decided to assemble a second one. *People's Poets Project: Lasting Impressions*, the Project's second collection, was published in July 2000 and sold one hundred and ninety copies.

The topic of sports, and the White Sox in particular, figure prominently in Charles's poetry for this second volume. Poems titled "Nightmare on 35th Street," "Those Were the Days," "Remember," and "Sober Chicago Sports Day, Part Two" all address the White Sox, and several specifically mention Comiskey Park. In his poem "Remember," Charles positions the line "Remember when the Chicago White Sox had fans" amidst a series of other memories, including a time "when Dr. King and Jackie Robinson won the fight." Other poems focus on Comiskey Park in even greater detail. In "Nightmare on 35th Street," Charles examines the relationship between the design of Comiskey Park and the poor attendance at White Sox games, writing,

I love baseball  
But I refuse to fall  
I refuse to fall from the top of the ball mall.

I love my White Sox's  
But I hate their stupid new park  
How can you build something worst than what you're tearing down?

We must stop blaming the upper deck  
Because Comiskey is in a wreck  
The upper deck is a small part of a larger problem

By offering Comiskey Park as a metaphor for the team, Charles suggests that both have problems that go beyond the surface and that both need to be re-built.

### Sports Journalism

As in his poetry and his stand-up comedy, the White Sox, and Comiskey Park in particular, and issues of race also figured prominently in the columns Charles wrote as the sports editor for *New Expression*, a position he held throughout his junior and senior years as a high school student. For example, Charles explored the problems with Comiskey Park's upper deck in a column titled "Rebuild the Park and the Fans Will Come," published in *New Expression's* September 1999 issue. In this column, Charles adds his own voice to those connecting the steadily declining numbers of fans attending White Sox games over the past eight years and the current state of Comiskey Park:

I along with many other new Comiskey Park visitors have stories to tell of our nightmare in Comiskey's upper deck. The last time I sat in Comiskey's upper deck, was about a month ago. Man was I hungry, but I was so afraid that I would fall from Comiskey's upper deck that I literally did not move the whole game. [...]

Earlier this year I read a Chicago Sun-Times article called "If You Rebuild It They Will Come." And there has been some talk about the White Sox rebuilding Comiskey Park. [...] No matter if "the kids can play" or not, the fans will not come to an unfriendly ballpark, and Comiskey Park may be the most fan-unfriendly ballpark in the majors today.

Drawing upon a recently published piece he'd read in the *Sun-Times* and experiences of Sox fans, including himself, Charles makes a strong case for making changes to Comiskey Park, particularly to the upper deck.

Issues of race were also a fairly prominent topic of Charles's sports journalism. In his column titled "What's Wrong with Sports Today?" Charles voiced a pointed critique of professional baseball's racial inequalities, drawing specifically on his knowledge of baseball history and, in particular, his extensive knowledge of Chicago's professional baseball teams. After opening this piece with a discussion of racism in upper echelons of professional sports, Charles writes,

For years, people of color have fought for the opportunity to play professional sports. Now, they are fighting for the opportunity to coach and own professional teams.

For the first time in Chicago baseball history, both respective managers are people of color. Don Baylor manages the Cubs and Jerry Manuel manages the White Sox. Both are African-American.

Throughout the rest of the article, Charles supports this point with portions of interviews he conducted with members of the White Sox management at the White Sox annual media event.

### **Laminating Kinesiology 341**

Charles benefited from his stand-up comedy, poems, and sports columns in a number of ways. Clearly, engagement with these self-sponsored literacies gave him a great deal of pleasure. The smile I saw on Charles's face as I watched him perform his stand-up routine in front of the crowds that packed into the student union and his residence hall and when he talked about his published poetry and sports columns during our interviews indicated how much he enjoyed these activities. They also helped Charles develop a base of knowledge about a number of topics of interest to him as an African-American from Chicago's south side and a current member of the university's student body, including, as discussed earlier, the White Sox and their stadium and race relations.<sup>4</sup> In addition, these self-sponsored literacies also afforded him opportunities to lend his voice quite publicly to conversations about the Sox and their stadium and issues of racism. Finally, his engagement with these literacies also taught Charles something

about writing, including a host of practices involved in drafting, revising, researching, memorizing, and performing these texts.

In addition, I see these self-sponsored literacies enhancing Charles's second kinesiology essay. In "Intertextualities: Volosinov, Bakhtin, Literary Theory, and Literacy Studies," Charles Bazerman identifies intertextual awareness as a crucial skill for navigating the literate worlds we inhabit. According to Bazerman, the ability to situate a focal text within a rich network of other texts "increases one's agency by planting literate activity in a richer context, increasing one's ability to move around within that context, and helping one deploy parts of it for one's own purposes" (61-62). Explaining how using intertextuality helps both readers and writers, Bazerman writes,

[d]eveloping a highly articulated picture of the ambient relevant texts can help the writer to define and even redefine the rhetorical situation, position the new text within larger organizations of textual utterances and activities, and bring deeper and richer resources to bear on the current task. Similarly, a highly developed view of the intertextual landscape helps a reader interpret, evaluate, and use a text more effectively. (61)

Both as readers and writers, a rich, full perspective of intertextual networks helps persons to understand texts more deeply and act with them more effectively. In short, as Bazerman states, "[t]he more broadly and precisely students and other writers envision the intertextual world they can draw on, the more powerful set of flexible options they will have on hand" (63). In this sense, I see the rich intertextual world of Charles's self-sponsored literacies providing him with a powerful set of tools for engaging with Springwood's analysis in his second kinesiology essay.

For Charles as a reader, it seems likely that multiple encounters with Comiskey Park and issues of race across this rich chronotopic network of self-sponsored literacies mediate his engagement with Springwood's discussion. Drawing on Wittgenstein's notion of crisscrossing a landscape as a metaphor for acquiring knowledge, McGinley and Tierney suggest that different forms of writing serve as multiple routes for crossing and re-crossing a topical landscape, widening and enriching students' knowledge of a topic of study through multiple passes from different perspectives. My sense is that Charles's self-sponsored literacies functioned similarly, as traversals across the topic of the White Sox's Comiskey Park and issues of race. Given Charles's rich knowledge of both of these subjects, it is easy to see how Springwood's

treatment of baseball stadiums and race relations captured and held his attention. Of course, in disposing him toward those topics, this network also attenuated his attention to the many other themes Springwood addressed, including issues of nationhood, family, gender, travel and tourism, democracy, and sexuality. This is not to say that Charles did not mention any of these topics in his second critique, but he certainly did not address them with the same depth as he did the design of ball parks and the sport's racial problems.

I would likewise argue that Charles's self-sponsored literacies also helped him as a writer as he crafted his critique. By foregrounding Comiskey Park and race relations in his essay, Charles could bring the knowledge he had accrued through his stand-up comedy, poetry, and sports columns to bear on Springwood's argument. In addition to the more general knowledge his self-sponsored literacies afforded him regarding baseball and racial issues, it also seems that they might be providing him with specific discourse to employ as well. The observations about problems with Comiskey Park, and with the stadium's upper deck in particular, that Charles employs to extend Springwood's point about ballparks in urban settings seem to index the content and theme of his "Rebuild the Park" story. The information regarding the low numbers of Blacks in management positions that Charles uses to critique Springwood's point about baseball's racial problems seems to index the content and theme of his "What's Wrong with Sports Today" piece. These close similarities suggest that in writing his critique, Charles is drawing upon language that is somewhat "prefabricated" in the sense that he had used it before in his sports columns.

It also seems likely that Charles might be drawing upon some of the other kinds of writing-related knowledge he took from his self-sponsored literacies. In my earlier analysis of Charles's writing for the Rhetoric 101 course he took the semester before, I argued that Charles redeployed literate practices he had developed for crafting news stories as a strategy for engaging with sources in essays for the rhetoric course. The move toward critique, for example, is an important part of Charles's comedy and sports journalism. "The premise for every joke," writes Betsy Borns, "is that something is wrong—with you, with the country, with your mother, with something! If nothing is wrong it's not a joke, it's making conversation" (29). Critique is also an important part of sports journalism. In one of our first interviews on his early experiences reading sports journalism, Charles repeatedly mentioned Jay Mariotti's column in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. When I asked why he enjoyed Mariotti's pieces, Charles replied, "because of his writing style and

because he criticizes everyone, except Michael Jordan." Given the emphasis on critique in Charles's self-sponsored literacies, it seems likely that he might draw upon those experiences in critiquing Springwood's comments about Comiskey Park and baseball's racial issues. In essence, this wealth of knowledge gleaned from his self-sponsored literacies allowed Charles to craft his essay as a rhetorical space in which he could speak to Springwood with a voice of an expert rather than a student. As a result, Charles is able to do more than merely summarize the major points of the assigned book. Positioning his second critique in this extensive intertextual network perhaps even allowed Charles to shift the rhetorical context from a response to a class assignment toward a discussion among baseball fans and scholars of the sport, a move which would significantly increase his agency and authority.

In addition to the discourses and texts just mentioned,<sup>5</sup> Charles's second critique is laminated with a number of other elements from this chronotopic network. Many of the various baseball figures that Charles mentions in his kinesiology essay, including the African-American players, coaches, and managers he references, are mentioned by name in his poems (e.g., Albert Belle and Jackie Robinson) and sports columns (e.g., Don Baylor, Jerry Manuel, Larry Doby, and, again, Jackie Robinson). The same is true of the times, places, and events Charles references in his critique. In addition to mentioning his own embodied experiences watching Sox games from New Comiskey's upper deck and attending Cubs games at Wrigley Field, Charles also points to his experiences attending Sox Fest, the White Sox annual media event, and living in Chicago more broadly. Charles's second critique is also laminated with his physical and emotional reactions to events in his life, including the hunger and the uneasiness he felt while sitting in the upper deck and the racial tensions he experienced at the university and elsewhere.

It also seems possible that these self-sponsored literacies may have enhanced Charles's performance in other aspects of the class. For example, in her comments on Charles's third paper, the professor thanks him for his "excellent contribution to class discussions." Perhaps the discursive practices that afforded Charles a strong voice in Kinesiology 341, a class that he initially found to be very intimidating, were laminated with those from his stand-up performances as well as his successful performance in Speech 101. Whether the knowledge from his self-sponsored literacies that helped Charles with his second kinesiology essay was declarative or procedural, or whether it shaped his writing or his reading or both, my sense is that this chronotopic network afforded Charles some degree of what Shannon Carter calls "rhetorical dexterity," the ability to effectively read, understand, and

navigate the linguistic and other codes of a new community based on the learner's assessment of a more familiar one (14).

Drawing upon the knowledge he gained through his self-sponsored literacies seemed to hold real promise for Charles as he continued to read and write his way through Kinesiology 341. Perhaps motivated by his professor's comments on the second essay, he again drew upon Comiskey Park in his next critique of Robert Rinehart's *Players All: Performances in Contemporary Sport*. Addressing Rinehart's point that collecting permanent "markers of experience" of major sporting events has replaced the temporary "experience" itself, Charles listed the many "markers" he'd collected and saved from attending White Sox games, including "scorecards, programs, pictures, and ticket stubs," and elaborated on his favorite features of watching those games in person. This third essay of Charles's earned an even higher grade, and the professor's end comment read, "[a] nice job on the main points. You tie these to interesting first-hand examples—keep up the great work. Thanks also for your excellent contribution to class discussion—It is obvious that you care about class ideas + theories." In addition to awarding significantly higher scores on the second and third assignments, the professor had shifted the emphasis of her end comments from Charles's sentence-level difficulties to the quality of the examples he employed in his critiques and his contributions to class discussions as well. At this point in the course, Charles's anxiety had been replaced by a growing confidence in his ability to engage productively and successfully with the assigned texts. By the end of the semester, Charles had worked his way into an A for his overall course grade, which was based primarily on the scores for his essays.

Over the space of a semester, then, Charles moved from falling short of meeting the literate demands of the course to a level of engagement with the texts and theories that the instructor saw as exemplary. I would argue that many factors informed Charles's improvement. In Kinesiology 341, Charles certainly encountered a number of the factors that contribute to literate development, including opportunities to write, teacher supportiveness, feedback from teachers and peers, repeat performance opportunities, and whole-class discussion (Rogers 375), and he probably encountered these factors in some of the other courses he was enrolled in that semester as well, including Rhetoric 102, the second class in the university's basic writing sequence. Importantly, Rogers's list of factors also includes students' pre-existing abilities and writing experiences, and I would argue that the writing-related knowledge Charles acquired through his self-sponsored literacies allowed him, a basic writer by the university's standards, to succeed in the

major writing assignments for an upper-division writing-intensive course. Charles did not intend to major in kinesiology, but passing Kinesiology 341 allowed him to continue his progress through the undergraduate curriculum and probably bolstered his confidence as a student as well. In addition to making the kinesiology course seem less like an alien world, these kinds of connections were important in other ways as well. Prior and Shipka note that in addition to weaving together literate activities, "chronotopic lamination melds together supposedly separate domains of life" (205). For Charles, these laminations allowed him to weave his personal interests into his academic aspirations of majoring in journalism and pursuing a career as a journalist, thus further thickening and strengthening the alignments between his extracurricular and curricular lives. Perhaps even more importantly, Charles's knowledge of sports and race afforded him the opportunity to weave his school and non-school worlds together, to write himself into the university's curriculum and extracurriculum in ways that let him create and maintain the racial identity he claimed for himself as an African American, which was no small task at a large and predominantly white college.

It is also important to address the profoundly dialogic relationship between Charles's school- and self-sponsored engagements. In many ways, the literate activities of the kinesiology course mediated Charles's engagements with sports outside of the class. For example, in one of his later kinesiology critiques, Charles expressed a desire to visit the famed "Field of Dreams" in Iowa. Referring back to Springwood's point about nostalgia, Charles wrote, "[m]y father resides in Iowa, and I am now strongly considering making the trip to Iowa with my dad during spring break to visit the 'Field of Dreams'. I want to get a first hand look at the site; I want to feel the 'Nostalgia'." With spring break just a few weeks away, Charles's statement suggests that his engagement with Springwood's book earlier in the semester is informing his plans for his visit with his father. I don't know if Charles did indeed visit the "Field of Dreams" during spring break. I do know, though, that he continued to write about Comiskey Park in the journalism pieces he wrote following his semester of Kinesiology 341. In the fall of his sophomore year at the university, Charles's story about the White Sox's upcoming season appeared in that semester's issue of *The Orange and Blue Observer*, a conservative, libertarian newsletter authored by UIUC students. In that piece, Charles reiterated the many problems with Comiskey Park he'd voiced in his self-sponsored literacies and again in his second essay for kinesiology, and then outlined a number of renovations expected to be completed before the 2002 season. In a sense, it seems that Charles was able to increase his

agency when writing for *The Orange and Blue Observer* by drawing upon his engagement with professional baseball, and the White Sox in particular, in Kinesiology 341. In addition to affording him the opportunity to write publicly about his beloved White Sox and their ballpark, his *Observer* story also allowed Charles, an African American from Chicago's south side, to reach a new audience. Describing the densely intertextual pathways that connect persons' utterances to spheres of human activity, Mikhail Bakhtin wrote in "The Problem with Speech Genres" that "language enters life through concrete utterances [...] and life enters language through concrete utterances as well" (63). Having traced the complex laminations of Charles's self- and school-sponsored literacies, I sense that together they form part of a rich chronotopic network through which language enters his life and with which he can write his life into his language.

### **SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES OF BASIC WRITERS' SELF-SPONSORED LITERACIES**

Granted, shifting our perceptions of basic writers and their self-sponsored literacies will certainly not happen overnight. As Min-Zhan Lu, evoking Geneva Smitherman, reminds us, "one cannot erase 'with the stroke of a pen' long-held attitudes and deeply-entrenched biases" ("Composition's Word Work" 206). Still, my hope is that adding this portrait of Charles to those of Maria, Ethel, Joe Baxter, and Jacob will make it easier for us to recognize that the basic writers in our classrooms are part of what Kathleen Yancey refers to as the "writing public" engaged in the writing "taking place largely outside of school" (300; see also Brandt). At the very least, the portraits of these students reinforce the notion that the term "basic writer" only refers to learners' relative inexperience with the kinds of literacies privileged in the academy, and not to their literate lives on the whole (Horner, "Discoursing Basic Writing"; Lu and Horner, *Representing*). This detailed portrait of Charles can also make it easier for us to recognize the many benefits afforded by self-sponsored literacies. In many ways, the literate activities of comedy stages, poets projects, and sports columns offer Charles the same kinds of benefits that Anne Gere saw accruing from the self-sponsored writing groups that gather in "living rooms, nursing homes, community centers, churches, shelters for the homeless" (76), including "[p]ositive feelings about oneself and one's writing, motivation to revise and improve composition skills, opportunities for publication of various sorts, the belief that writing can make a difference in individual and community life" (78). The fact that certain

literate activities are self-sponsored does not diminish their importance for basic writers' development as writers and participants in the world.

Further, Charles's story pushes us to acknowledge that those benefits include strengthening basic writers' academic engagements. Although they may appear as discrete, autonomous islands of writing, self-sponsored and school-sponsored literacies develop in conjunction with, rather than apart from, one another. Charles's self-sponsored literacies helped him to develop what Rosemary Arca describes as "that sense of potency as a writer who not only has something to say but also has the skills to say it well" (141) and in a manner acceptable to the academy. I can imagine that the self-sponsored writing done by Joe, featured in Mutnick's study, and Jacob, from Sternglass's research, benefited their academic writing in a number of ways. In fact, those accounts hint toward these kinds of laminations. Joe's having written a science fiction novel that features a Black main character does seem to inform the school essay he writes about the absence of Blacks in science fiction. Likewise, Jacob's reflections on his own stylistic choices in writing countless poems, short stories, and a short novel seem to inform the critique of Thomas Kuhn's writing style he included in a paper on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* for a world civilization class.

My sense is that recognizing the importance of basic writers' self-sponsored literacies could impact our research in important ways. This portrait of the far-flung network of literate activities laminating Charles's engagement with kinesiology suggests the need to adopt theoretical and methodological frameworks that can make visible the historical trajectories of discourse, people, places, practices, and artifacts as they are repurposed across what might appear to be unrelated and temporally and spatially distant activities. Without such frameworks, researchers might assume that the literacy event witnessed in the here and now is all that needs to be studied, or that the material inscriptions animating the present activity are all that need to be collected and examined. Lacking such a perspective, an examination of Charles's successes with kinesiology might remain situated comfortably within the privileged temporal and spatial boundaries of that university course, or perhaps school more broadly, without attending to other aspects of his literate life. Our theories and methods also need to address the transformations across representational media that can occur throughout such networks. Lacking those, researchers stand to overlook the semiotic pathway of Charles's comedy bits as they are initially entextualized and revised in his joke book; then memorized; then voiced and performed during his stand-up routines; and then re-entextualized as they are written

into his kinesiology essays. As a way of broadening our attention beyond basic writers' self-sponsored short stories, novels, and the other texts most commonly associated with creative writing, the theories and methods we employ to examine the self-sponsored literate networks students assemble also need to address more fully the kinds of "minor texts" (249), including lists, notes, and labels, that Stephen Witte examined, as well as the broader range of communicative tools Vygotsky pointed to, including "various systems for counting; mnemonic techniques; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing; schemes; diagrams; maps; and mechanical drawings" (137). In making visible the wide range of elements that flow into and emanate from literate activities, such theories and methods can contribute to the development of models of writing that more fully represent the richness of students' literate lives and the complexity of how they navigate textual worlds.

Viewing students' self-sponsored literate activities as key resources that inform their school writing could help encourage basic writing research to contribute to the growing body of scholarship in composition studies addressing issues of "writing transfer" (Beaufort; Bergmann and Zepernick; Nowacek; Reiff and Bawarshi; Smit; Rounsaville; Wardle). In *The End of Composition Studies*, David Smit asserts that beyond the basic knowledge that persons do splice together seemingly diverse literate activities, there may be little more we can say about the horizontal nature of our students' growth as writers (132). And yet, Charles's case suggests that a great deal remains to be said, that we're only beginning to explore, theorize, understand, and discuss the various kinds of activities basic writers are engaged in, their influence on each other, and the connections forged between them. Increased attention to self-sponsored literacies would also invite us to examine the sites that sponsor their development. In *Words at Work and Play: Three Decades in Family and Community Life*, Shirley Brice Heath predicts that "learning that lies outside formal instruction and designated experts" will play an increasingly important role in how persons develop skills and knowledge (170). "This kind of learning," Heath writes, "remains invisible to most adults; however, society will increasingly value the informal learning that comes through special interests, peer relationships, and mentors who inspire young people to play roles beyond those of child or student and to take on increasing levels of responsibility" (171). Heath's prediction suggests that we need to know more, much more, about creating, maintaining, and enhancing organizations such as *New Expression*, the student publication that fostered Charles's engagement with sports journalism and poetry, and the university's Open Mic Night, the space that sponsored Charles's stand-

up comedy. We also need to actively investigate the kinds of identities and responsibilities such literacy spaces occasion. In addition to helping us more readily recognize those spaces as vital to fostering a writing public, understanding them can also reveal how we might forge and maintain productive connections between those sites and our classrooms.

Richer, more robust conceptions of basic writers' self-sponsored writing could also prompt a shift in our teaching. In "The Idea of Expertise: An Exploration of Cognitive and Social Dimensions of Writing," Michael Carter writes that "[w]hat we do in our writing classrooms is determined, implicitly or explicitly, by our concepts of what it means to be an expert writer and how writers attain expertise" (280). Adopting the perspective that self-sponsored literacies are a key means through which basic writers might gain expertise, not just in first-year composition classes but also throughout the undergraduate curriculum, should prompt teachers to make those literacies part of their classrooms and curricula. One approach might involve raising the issue of self-sponsored literacies with the students themselves by having them examine the purposes and functions such literacies serve and the kinds of practices they demand. In this sense, self-sponsored literacies become the focus of the kinds of analytic writing students learn to do in the core curriculum classes as well as their majors. Pedagogically, this move seems like a logical extension of asking students to engage with the literacy narratives of Richard Rodriguez, Victor Villanueva, Fan Shen, and Malcolm X, but with a focus on the students themselves and their own textual engagements. We might begin by asking students to examine the roles that self-sponsored literacies play in the lives of Joe Baxter and Jacob, for example, and then, in turn, ask them to examine the roles that self-sponsored literacies play in their own lives. We might, for example, take up Beverly Moss's invitation to have students examine what they have learned about literacy from their religious engagements and to analyze the "points of common ground" and "points of conflict" (Moss 137) with their academic activities. If, as Bazerman argues, writers benefit from configuring the intertextual world as broadly as possible, then we should work toward developing curricula that help them do so. At the very least, we want curricula that help students to see that the relevance of a text or literate activity should not be determined by whether or not it was assigned by a teacher.

In designing a curriculum that includes basic writers' self-sponsored engagements with reading and writing, though, we need to be careful to do so in a manner that does not suggest that they are merely some sort of "crutch" that students should use only until they feel more comfortable with the

kinds of literacies privileged in the academy. The lamination of academic and self-sponsored literacies is not the equivalent of a kind of “training wheel” which eventually needs to be taken off so that learners can do the “real” textual work of their chosen disciplines and professions. Studies of learners at a variety of points throughout their lives and at a number of educational levels, including students in elementary school (Dyson; Pahl, “Timescales and Ethnography,” “Texts as Artefacts”), middle school (Finders; Shuman), and high school (Smith and Wilhelm); in first-year composition and other introductory undergraduate courses (Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor, and Otuteye; Reiff and Bawarshi; Roozen, “From Journals to Journalism”; Roozen and Herrera, “Indigenous Interests”); in upper-division undergraduate courses (Roozen, “The ‘Poetry Slam,’ Mathemagicians, and Middle-School Math”; Russell and Yañez); in MA and PhD programs (Prior and Shipka; Roozen, “Tracing Trajectories of Practice,” “‘Fan Fic-ing’ English Studies”); and working professionals (Prior and Shipka; Roozen, “Seeing the Whole Patient”), indicate that the weaving together of multiple literate engagements is a key element of literate development throughout the lifespan.<sup>6</sup>

Describing all that the lamination of literate activity encompasses, Prior and Shipka write, “[i]t is especially about the ways we not only come to inhabit made-worlds, but constantly make our worlds—the ways we select from, (re)structure, fiddle with, and transfrom the material and social worlds we inhabit” (182). Ultimately, our portraits of Maria, Ethel, Joe Baxter, Jacob, and Charles Scott, Jr., speak powerfully to the important roles that self-sponsored literacies can play in helping basic writers inhabit, remake, reconfigure, even productively disrupt, the densely textual landscapes they traverse throughout the undergraduate curriculum and, more importantly, throughout their lives. Those landscapes are populated with the literacies of students’ homes, neighborhoods, and communities just as much as they are with the literacies of their disciplines and professions; of stand-up routines, poets projects, and sports journalism just as much as of school and work.

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### Notes

1. Charles granted permission for his real name to be used when he volunteered to participate in this research in September of 2000. He continued to grant permission to do so each year we continued this project and after reading drafts of the many conference presentations and the dissertation chapter that emerged from this research.

2. Kinesiology is a field of study devoted to human movement and performance related to health and physical education, physical and occupational therapy, and sport and exercise. As a field, kinesiology is informed by sciences including anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics, but it also has a strong sociological and ethnographic component, particularly regarding the cultural function of sports and leisure activities in cultural settings. The course that Charles took, Kinesiology 341: Games in Culture, focused on the sociological aspects of kinesiology.

3. Throughout this article, I present excerpts from Charles’s writing exactly as written, recognizing that they frequently include unconventional grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

4. Self-sponsored activities such as Charles’s stand-up comedy routines and the various texts associated with them may seem so mundane as to be fairly unimportant. However, consider the opening of Mary Louise Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zone” in which she reflects on all that her son Sam learned from his engagement with baseball cards: “Sam and Willie learned a lot about phonics that year by trying to decipher surnames on baseball cards, and a lot about cities, states, heights, weights, places of birth, stages of life. In the years that followed, I watched Sam apply his arithmetic skills to working out bat-

ting averages and subtracting retirement years from rookie years; I watched him develop senses of patterning and order by arranging and rearranging his cards for hours on end, and aesthetic judgment by comparing different photos, different series, layouts, and color schemes. American geography and history took shape in his mind through baseball cards. Much of his social life revolved around trading them, and he learned about exchange, fairness, trust, the importance of process as opposed to results, what it means to get cheated, taken advantage of, even robbed. Baseball cards were the medium of his economic life too. Nowhere better to learn the power and arbitrariness of money, the absolute divorce between use value and exchange value, notions of long- and short-term investment, the possibility of personal values that are independent of market values" (517). My sense is that, as with Pratt's son, Charles's self-sponsored literacies provide one avenue for him to examine topics including racism, geography, economics, history, and so on.

5. I do not wish to suggest that the intertextual network informing Charles's second critique is limited to only the self-sponsored texts and activities detailed in this article. Rather, it reaches deep into many of the other literate activities Charles talked about during our interviews. Some of his early encounters with professional sports, for example, came through reading about the exploits of his favorite teams in the sports sections of newspapers like the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and the *Chicago Defender*. One early memory involved his great-aunt and -uncle reading the newspaper at the kitchen table each morning, with Charles waiting rather impatiently for them to hand him the sports page so he could check the baseball scores and read what the local sports columnists had to say about the Cubs and the White Sox. Another of his earliest sports-related memories involved reading and memorizing the statistics on the backs of the baseball cards he collected so that he could impersonate for his family and friends the baseball announcers who were calling televised baseball games. He also recalled reading the information on tickets, programs, and other memorabilia he collected from the games he attended. Later, when he had access to a computer, he read the sports pages online, a practice that he continued on a daily basis throughout high school and college.

6. In his author's note to a chapter of *An Open Language*, Mike Rose describes the importance of these kinds of laminations to the writing he did during his doctoral studies and then later still as he wrote *Lives on the Boundary*: "For some time before I began my doctoral studies in education, I had been writing poetry. Much of it, especially the early stuff, wasn't all that good,

but it brought me such pleasure, hiding away a few afternoons each week, unplugging the phone, and getting lost in writing. [...] One thing I did was to photocopy a few paragraphs on the structure of long-term memory from a cognitive psychology textbook and tape them on a large sheet of paper. Underneath them, I placed some lines of poetry I had written about events from my childhood: a discussion of memorial processes right next to a description of memories. [...] It was this sort of fooling around with text and genre that would lead to the form of *Lives on the Boundary*. Over the next few months, I would shift from poetry to narrative vignette—about my own education and that of others as well—and in place of the textbook passages, there would be analysis of the kind I was writing for scholarly journals" (287-88). Rose's description suggests that the laminating of multiple discourses and literate activities Charles engages in is an essential part of literate development throughout the lifespan and not a practice employed only by entering college students to write their way into the university.

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