CAPITALIZING ON LITERACY: FEDERAL ADULT EDUCATION POLICY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that federal adult education policy adheres to a human capital discourse that reinforces the flawed perception that literacy acquisition alone begets individual and, by extension, national economic progress. To illuminate the lasting influence of this discourse and the skills-based definition of literacy it encourages, I examine the history of federal adult education policy from its inception in the 1960s War on Poverty programs through its recent developments in workforce education. Analyzing public laws, the Congressional Record, and Congressional committee reports I demonstrate that policy narratives about literacy and literacy learners are intimately tied not only to the belief that investments in literacy education will foster upward mobility and national progress, but also to political interests in maintaining a social order in which citizenship depends upon one’s contribution to the nation’s economic productivity. My project contends that writing studies scholars need to pay greater attention to how this human capital discourse reifies characterizations of literacy as set of neutral, context free, fixed, and stable skills. Despite writing studies scholarship refuting this characterization, such notions of literacy persist and are quite plausible to both government officials and the public. The discursive context of public policy making and the rhetorical strategies employed therein affect the infrastructure and public perception of adult literacy education, as well as the broader issues of what literacy is and whom literacy serves. Because human capital discourse has a significant impact on our work as literacy researchers and educators, writing studies scholars should engage in the policy making process to broaden the scope of federally funded adult literacy programs and to extend public notions of literacy education beyond workforce training and the expansion of human capital.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THE PROMISE OF LITERACY EDUCATION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC: DEFENDING AND DEFINING ADULT EDUCATION</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CAPITALIZING ON ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FROM ADULT EDUCATION TO NATIONAL LITERACY: A DECADE OF CRISIS</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CAPITOL TALK ABOUT CAPITAL INVESTMENTS: UNDERSTANDING LITERACY EDUCATION THROUGH CONGRESSIONAL DEBATES</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONCLUSION: (RE)SITUATING LITERACY IN PUBLIC POLICY</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>APPENDIX A: LEGISLATIVE TIMELINE</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>APPENDIX B: JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY SPECIAL ISSUES ON ADULT EDUCATION</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
The Promise of Literacy Education

We face an adult education crisis that permeates every dimension of American life. It saps the energy and capability of our people, our economy, and our institutions. It feeds our national unemployment, the welfare rolls, and our correctional institutions. It literally robs America of its future.

*National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008, p. 1*

The National Commission on Adult Literacy (NCAL) claimed the above in its 2008 report *Reach Higher America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce.* According to this report, “Americans should have been stunned” at the National Assessment of Adult Literacy’s finding that 30 million American adults “could perform no more than the most rudimentary literacy tasks” and that “63 million adults could perform only simple, basic everyday literacy activities” (p. 2). This sentiment echoes that of many earlier reports, including the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983), Forrest P. Chisman’s *Jump Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy* (1989), and the Department of Education’s *Blueprint for Preparing America’s Future* (2003). Each of these reports cited the millions of Americans who lack the skills needed to succeed in the workforce and pointed to the detrimental consequences this skills deficiency imposes on America’s economic and political future.

The notion of an educational crisis rooted in adult illiteracy in the United States is far from new. What I find interesting about the 2008 NCAL report, however, is its call for an “Adult
Education and Economic Growth Act to overhaul and expand adult education and workforce skills training” (p. 19). The Commission’s primary recommendation was the following:

The National Commission on Adult Literacy calls on Congress to transform the adult education and literacy system into an adult education and workforce skills system with the capacity to effectively serve 20 million adults annually by the year 2020 (2008, p. 15, emphasis added).

In the NCAL’s proposed changes to existing policy, “literacy” is replaced with “workforce skills,” suggesting the current system of adult education in the United States gives insufficient attention to workforce skills training. This seems odd, given that the current federally funded adult education system exists as part of the Workforce Investment Act and is in large part meant to “assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency” (Workforce Investment Act, 1998, p. 129). Even the earliest adult education policy focused on preparing participants for employment; in 1964, the first federally funded program of adult basic education was written into the Economic Opportunity Act and in 1966, the Adult Education Act sought to help adults “to improve their basic education in preparation for occupational training and more profitable employment, and to become more productive and responsible citizens” (P.L. 89-750, Sec. 302).

At the same time, the NCAL recommendation is in keeping with policy trends; the history of the adult education policy over the past several decades reveals a narrowing of what counts as adult literacy education, with increasing emphasis on employment related skills training. In specifying the need for an expansion of services beyond “reading, writing, math, and English language proficiency…to teach adults how to communicate, acquire information, think critically, solve problems, use technology, and work in teams,” the NCAL report took concerns
with workforce training in a potentially new direction for policy (2008, p. 22). This report called for a system that focuses not just on basic skills but also on activities and habits of mind deemed important in a variety of workplaces. On one hand, this appears to improve upon existing understandings of adult education in federal policy; in moving away from a singular focus on decontextualized, mechanistic skills, the NCAL report draws attention to the situated nature of learning. On the other hand, the report also suggests that learning should happen for the primary purpose of improving employment opportunities. In doing so, the report overlooks the multiple other goals of education, ranging from improved social networks to cultural appreciation to civic engagement.

Reports like Reach Higher, as well as the federal policy such reports influence, are part of a human capital discourse that currently dominates federal adult education policy, as well as the definitions of literacy employed in such policy. As an element of human capital, literacy has gained the status of resource—one that is increasing in value as information becomes an increasingly powerful participant in economic development. As Deborah Brandt (2005) argued, “literacy is now what iron ore or oil once was; a raw material to engine the GNP. That this raw material is drawn from human beings rather than from the earth—and that it's the same raw material upon which our civil liberties practically rely—marks a turning point in the history of literacy well worth our attention and study” (p. 306). The “modern economy” depends as much on the knowledge possessed by workers as it does on tangible resources of land, natural resources, or manufactured goods. As literacy was transformed from “an attribute of a ‘good’ individual into an individual ‘good,’” Brandt asserted, it became “something extractable, something measurable, something rentable, and thereby something worthy of rational investment” (2004, p. 485). I argue that this investment has cost us a great deal more than
money: twentieth-century federal education policy’s adherence to a human capital perspective has reduced learners to commodities whose educational credentials make them more or less valuable to national economic productivity.

This human capital perspective has exerted a strong and troubling influence on the history of U.S. legislation, an influence that has been particularly clear in adult education policies. Legislators working on adult literacy policies have focused mainly on how to more efficiently provide literacy education and job training to those who need it; there is little discussion of the institutional, social, and political factors that have led to economic advantages and disadvantages. The role of human capital theory in educational policy poses significant concerns for literacy scholars and practitioners because it affects public perception about the purpose of education, promoting views that often conflict with our educational goals as scholars and teachers. In addition, because human capital theory characterizes education as the imparting of discrete skills assumed to be transferable across all individuals and contexts, it contradicts much of our field’s work on literate activity and the contextual, situated nature of written communication. Instead, policy makers continue working with assumptions about literacy that have become normalized and unquestioned.

The problems of human capital theory and its influence on public policy definitions of literacy are, therefore, not limited to the adult basic education context. The economic justification for literacy education increasingly enters into our work as postsecondary literacy educators in a number of ways, including the expectations of our students and the expectations of administrative bodies determining funding and accountability requirements for composition programs. Writing studies scholars must understand that federal policies are part of an entire discursive realm in which certain ideologies shape dominant notions of literacy and literacy
What is more, the ideological workings of human capital discourse are obscured by the presentation of “common sense”—and allegedly non-ideological—explanations for the value of literacy and literacy education.

**Adult Literacy in the Federal Context**

While it is hard to imagine a strong argument against providing educational opportunities for adults, Samuel Halperin\(^1\) noted that enactment of the Adult Education Act in 1966 required, “no less than a massive realignment of Congressional attitudes, a perceived serious threat to national security, and quite possibly a presidential assassination to turn a simple idea into legislative reality.” Until the 1960s the federal government had little to no involvement in adult education in the United States. Although included as part of the New Deal relief measures during the 1930s, adult education was low on the government’s list of priorities. This changed quite dramatically during the Johnson-era Great Society reforms and the War on Poverty. Suddenly adult education was important enough to be written into the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.\(^2\)

The stated purpose of Title II, Part B of that law indicated one reason why the government increased its attention to adult education:

> It is the purpose of this legislation to initiate programs of instruction for persons 18 years old and older whose inability to read or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to obtain or retain employment. (1964 Economic Opportunity Act, Title II, Part B, “Adult Basic Education,” emphasis added)

Following the trend of human capital theory, adult education’s importance hinged on the relationship between education and work. This policy directly links a lack of education to

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\(^1\) Halperin served as Assistant U.S. Commissioner of Education for Legislation and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare from 1961-1969.

\(^2\) See Appendix A for a legislative timeline of federal adult education policies.
unemployment, which was a national problem requiring government intervention. This connection was expanded in 1966 with the creation of the Adult Education Act, which moved responsibility for adult education programs from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Office of Education. That law states:

It is the purpose of this legislation to encourage and expand basic educational programs for adults to enable them to overcome English language limitations, to improve their basic education in preparation for *occupational training and more profitable employment*, and to become *more productive and responsible citizens*. (1966 Adult Education Act, emphasis added)

The Adult Education Act extended beyond the consequences of adults’ lack of education, indicating as well what basic educational programs could do for those adults. Specifically, such programs were intended to prepare adults for occupational training and profitable employment; but even more than that, adult basic education would make them more productive and responsible citizens. The notions of productive and responsible citizenship are certainly loaded and this legislation carries assumptions about just what these terms mean and why productivity and responsibility are important characteristics of citizenship. The role of literacy education in promoting such characteristics is likewise assumed; it seems to go without saying that “basic educational programs for adults” will enhance their status as citizens, a status that depends on being productive and responsible.

The federal interpretation of the purpose and meaning of literacy education in this policy is quite different from the purposes and meanings developed by writing studies scholars. The 1966 Adult Education Act, for example, defined “adult basic education” as
education for adults whose inability to speak, read, or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment, with a view to making them less likely to become dependent on others, to improving their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increasing their opportunities for more profitable and productive employment, and to making them better able to meet their adult responsibilities.

This definition of adult basic education focuses on primarily economic terms, emphasizing the potential of literacy—figured as speaking, reading, and writing the English language—to determine one’s occupational status. This example is but one illustration of the ideology dominating adult education policy—namely, a human capital perspective that values education as a resource capable of producing social and individual economic success.

Underlying my work in this project is a notion of literacy extending beyond the popular notion of literacy as a set of transferrable skills capable of producing individual and thereby social economic advancement. Rather, I envision literacy as social activity grounded in cultural practice. Ideally, engaging in literate activities will allow people to exert agency in their local contents, and that agency will have an impact on the broader social, political, and economic contexts in which they act. Such agency is less likely to be developed by the acquisition of discrete skills than by the continued development of social networks that encourage literate activity, the use of texts to communicate and do things in the world.

The development of such ability would require a much different picture of education broadly and literacy education in particular than that developed by policy. However, it would also require literacy studies scholars to recognize the role of existing educational policy, and the policy context itself, in fostering (or not) alternatives. And it would require us to rethink our
approaches to communicating about literacy with audiences outside of academia. While there does exist work in adult education that incorporates such notions of literacy, the dominance of the human capital model inhibits literacy programs that would promote literacy as social activity.

Human Capital

Human capital, claimed Gary Becker (2002), “is by far the most important form of capital in modern economies” (p. 3). Goldin and Katz (2008) echoed this sentiment when they called the twentieth century the “Human Capital Century,” but went a step further by also declaring it the “American Century,” claiming that the United States ruled this era partially because it invested so substantially in education, one of the primary means for increasing human capital. Unlike the tangible resources of land, machines, and money, human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and even health of individuals that influence their employment and income potentials (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1962; Baptiste, 2001). The theory of human capital connects people’s economic productivity directly to their educational development; its proponents assert that because education leads to an increase in skill, which in turn leads to an increase in productivity, investments in education are considered investments in human capital. Though the idea of human capital extends back to the eighteenth century with Adam Smith’s notion of humans as capital, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that Chicago School economists like Theodore Schultz (1961) and Gary Becker (1962, 1964) explicitly connected the idea to formal education, claiming that differences in earnings correspond to differences in education. Seeing a causal relationship, they suggested that human capital investments in education would generate economic returns in the form of better employment and higher wages.

As I mentioned above, the influence of human capital theory is especially evident in the historical development of federally funded adult education, which figured into the 1960s War on
Poverty legislation. The argument that investments in education would lead to employment opportunities for the nation’s impoverished citizens was particularly appealing at a time when Congress and the Johnson administration were pushing forward anti-poverty programs that would require a considerable increase in federal expenditures. As adult education policy transformed over the latter half of the twentieth century, it became increasingly centered on expanding individuals’ productive capacities through basic skills training. Hal Beder’s (1991) summary of the rationale for federal investment in adult education as a form of human capital is quite telling:

To a large extent the justification for the federal adult literacy program rests in a human capital argument which goes something like this: National productivity, and indeed security, depends on an educated workforce which is able to perform the sophisticated tasks required by technological complexity. Hence, investments in adult literacy represent social benefits. That is to say that, although individual learners benefit, a large part of the investment in adult literacy accrues to society as a whole in terms of the increased national wealth which productivity affords. (p. 14-15)

Brandt’s (2001, 2002) notion of sponsorship captures yet another dimension of government funding for adult literacy education. As she reminded us, sponsors “lend their resources or credibility to the sponsored, but do so for their own advantage, whether by direct repayment or, indirectly, by credit of association” (2002, p. 2; see also 2001, p. 19). Adult literacy education offers the government an opportunity to promote national economic progress, garnering continued political support from a populace concerned with financial stability; but the advantages to be gained extend further into maintaining an economic system that works to the benefit of policymakers.
Although attractive to policymakers for its economic justification of investments in education, human capital theory contains many questionable assumptions about education, learners, and the contexts in which both exist. In an extended historical examination of human capital theory in adult education pedagogy, Baptiste (2001) noted that “the term human capital refers to the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are developed and valued primarily for their economically productive potential” (p. 185, emphasis in original). One problematic consequence of human capital theory, according to Baptiste, is the assumption that “our world is an educational meritocracy in which a person’s socioeconomic status is limited, presumably, only by his or her educational investment: More educated people are always more productive than less educated people, and this differential productivity is sufficient to explain all social inequities” (p. 195). Such social inequities, as well as the lack of educational investments assumed responsible for them, are thus considered the responsibility of the individual. In her study of the discourses at work in Canadian adult education policy and essential skills policy, Gibb (2008) suggested that human capital theory, as one of the dominant discourses in such policy, assigns to individuals “full responsibility for performing particular sets of behaviors,” and conceals the institutional constraints within which individuals must act (p. 318). In assuming education to be the primary condition on which productivity rests, human capital theory discounts the influence of structural and institutional factors on individuals’ employment prospects.

Writing studies scholars add compelling arguments to the critiques offered by adult education researchers. Brandt (2003), for example, noted that “literacy learning…takes place within systems of unequal subsidy and unequal reward systems that range beyond the influence of any individual family’s assets” (p. 252). Speaking of the autonomous model of literacy, Street (2003) argued that such a model mistakenly assumes literacy education will “have the effect of
enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their ‘illiteracy’ in the first place” (p. 77). In much the same way, the human capital theory perspective ignores the structural constraints, such as institutional racism, that shape key predictors of educational success (e.g., family socioeconomic status, per capita expenditures for schools, teacher quality) figuring into the basic terms of human capital. As educational policies developed according to such a perspective, these structural constraints remained overlooked. Kaestle et al. (1991), for example, point out the contradiction of a faith in literacy to reduce unemployment:

Although some individuals may be unable to secure employment because they lack skills, unemployment is caused primarily by economic conditions and a general lack of jobs. [...] Even if we could make all citizens functionally literate, jobs to employ them all would not suddenly be created.” (p. 120)

Freire made the same argument twenty years earlier, claiming “Merely teaching men to read and write down does not work miracles; if there are not enough jobs for men able to work, teaching more to read and write will not create them” (1970, p. 401). Federal education policy conceals such contradictions, whether consciously or unconsciously, by focusing public attention on measurable outcomes and gains.

While many scholars have recognized its problems, human capital theory has remained quite compelling for policymakers. Becker’s (1964) early work in this area pointed out that “more highly educated and skilled persons almost always tend to earn more than others” and that “inequality in the distribution of earnings and income is generally positively related to inequality in education and other training” (p. 12). Such correlational evidence would seem to easily support the assumption that greater investments in education will lead to greater returns on those
investments. The empirical data that Becker and others accumulated over the years have reinforced such assumptions, lending a great deal of authority to human capital discourse in the policy context.

Despite the increasing emphasis on the economic promise of federally funded adult literacy education over the latter half of the twentieth century, recent studies have shown that such investments have failed to produce higher employment, more educated workers, or more effective educational programs. After studying data from reports of program performance, Baptiste and Nayanungo (2007) found that 64.2% of program participants gained employment, and “of those receiving employment, none seemed to have earned enough to pull a family of four half way out of poverty” (p. 21). Their study suggests that many participants in adult education do not see the employment opportunities promised by the legislation. This is not to say that literacy has no value or that literacy education cannot offer individuals any opportunity, but rather that the focus on basic skills for employment limits the kinds of benefits programs can offer.

The Politics of Defining Literacy

Concerns with literacy and illiteracy have long centered on disagreement over or confusion about how to define these terms. I would venture to say that the ambiguity of answers to the question “what is literacy?” has driven arguments about whether and why illiteracy is a problem in the first place. In the process of creating a political reality that could sustain federal funding for adult literacy education, however, certain choices had to be made about what would count as literacy—and what would not. For United States policymakers throughout the twentieth century, what counted were skills that would guarantee increased employment, though examinations of the validity of the literacy-as-skills model rarely took place in the policy
context. Attempts to define literacy actually had more to do with responding to poverty and unemployment and gaining support for educational programs that would curtail those problems.

As scholarship in writing studies has demonstrated, the specific practices signified by the terms “read” and “write” change depending on who one asks and when. Often these terms are refined according to levels of ability or according to the tasks such abilities should allow one to accomplish. For example, literacy might be defined as the ability to read and write at the eighth-grade level or as the ability to read and write well enough to get and retain productive employment. Daniel P. Resnick and Lauren B. Resnick (1977) noted that the number of people considered literate in the United States would change depending on whether we considered as a standard the ability to sign one’s name, the ability to decode a short passage of text, or the ability to interpret meaning from new text. However it is specified, this kind of definition characterizes literacy as a set of neutral, context-free, stable, and transferable skills. Such a characterization misrepresents literate activity and ignores the cultural and political dimensions of language and communication. Furthermore, it encourages ineffective teaching practices by suggesting that people can learn to read and write by mastering the formal rules of a language, free of any particular context. Critiquing a teaching method that was popularized after World War II and that broke literacy down into a series of testable skills, de Castell and Luke (1983) claimed that the literacy-as-skills model not only produces ineffective teaching and uninspired learning, but it also reinforces a status quo that is socially and economically damaging to many. When we employ such a characterization of literacy we mask the ideologies driving the valuation of certain literacy practices over others, we ignore the history of contestation over who should have access to literacy education, and we deny the possibility that our current educational system promotes a version of literacy education that serves the interests of some groups and not others.
One of the most prominent notions of literacy employed in policy discussions—from Congressional debates in the 1970s and 1980s through debates about the National Literacy Act and Workforce Investment Act of the 1990s—is that of functional literacy. While this definition was used by UNESCO in its literacy work in developing countries during the 1960s, functional literacy gained popularity in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, partly as a result of the Adult Performance Level Study and the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The NAEP expanded on earlier standards for literacy assessment, such as the ability to sign one’s name or the completion of various grades of schooling, and employed a functional definition that “encompasses a broad range of skills that adults use in accomplishing the many different types of literacy tasks associated with work, home, and community contexts” (Kirsch et al., 2002, p. 3).

Drawing heavily on the definition of literacy used by the NAEP, the National Adult Literacy Survey that followed in the early 1990s set the standard for literacy in adult education as consisting of functional skills divided into the categories of prose, document, and quantitative reading and (to a more limited extent) writing abilities.

While recognizing that individuals engage in multiple reading and writing tasks for various purposes, functional literacy draws attention to individual skills rather than the societal contexts in which people engage in literate activity. Scribner (1984) argued that functional literacy is tied to the metaphor of adaptation; individuals use literacy in order to adapt to the demands of everyday life. One problem she pointed out is that those demands are not static or stable and that what is necessary for participation in society and what is optional are matters of value and ideology. An additional complication is that while functional definitions of literacy center on individual needs and abilities to read and write, assessments of literacy levels rarely if
ever draw on individuals’ own assessments of their abilities to engage in the activities of their daily lives. I argue along with Scribner and many literacy researchers (e.g., Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Barton et al., 2007; Gee, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 2003; Yagelski, 2000) that such definitions, because they are historically and culturally situated in ideology, cannot be separated from culture and context and that functional definitions must be complicated by accounting for the role of social practice and cultural values.

Despite the existence of such scholarship, complex definitions of literacy as situated activity have not gained a foothold in public policy debates. Speaking of this very issue in a 1988 *Harvard Educational Review* article, Kazemek offered the following observation:

> As academics, researchers, and literacy experts, we must ask ourselves why such opinions are commonplace and why our stories—stories that document the relative nature of literacy and that disclose the bias of arguments that blame the victim but ignore the social and economic systems that victimize—are not getting through. I contend that the fault is partly ours because we do not know how to tell our stories persuasively.

(1988, p. 470)

There have been attempts to expand on policy representations of literacy, but this challenge to persuasively communicate our stories to government officials remains with us today.

E.D. Hirsch, Jr. represents one scholar who met with some success in offering an alternative to functional definitions of literacy in public policy. His 1987 *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* not only gained the status of New York Times bestseller, but

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3 Examples include recent work by the National Writing Project, the James R. Squire Office of Policy Research, and the Association of American Colleges and Universities. I review these briefly in the dissertation’s conclusion.
was also cited in a number of Congressional debates on education.\(^4\) In this text, Hirsch critiqued formalism, which considers literacy learning to be a matter of mastering techniques, and argued that specific content is more important since reading for meaning requires the reader to be familiar with the culture from which a text comes. Hirsch used this argument as a basis for promoting a “national literacy,” which he claimed would foster effective nation-wide communication by improving people’s abilities to use language in rhetorically effective ways; citizens would gain a certain mastery over written words that functional literacy might not provide (p. 9). Hirsch even suggested that social equality and justice rest on a national literacy; in his model, universal literacy and democracy are inseparable—true enfranchisement depends on knowledge, knowledge on literacy, and literacy on cultural literacy (pp. 11–12).

Hirsch has been widely criticized by scholars in English and writing studies both for the development of single national vocabulary that “all Americans need to know” and for basing the list on the cultural traditions of primarily white Anglo-Saxon Protestant society (see for example, Bizzell, 1988; Scholes, 1988; Sledd & Sledd, 1988). Though it represents an attempt to move beyond individual, cognitive-based definitions of literacy, Hirsch’s cultural literacy is problematic on a number of grounds. What concerns me here is the supposed universality of Hirsch’s model. While he conceded that the dominance of Western culture and its language practices is an unfortunate accident of history, Hirsch also claimed knowledge of such culture is a necessary basis for cultural literacy. He further reasoned that cultural literacy is not elitist because universal schooling allows everyone the opportunity to gain such literacy. Specifically, he argued that the distinction between those who have access to cultural literacy and those who

do not “is one of schooling, which we have made universal, not of economic or social class” (p. 106). Since everyone has access to schooling, it seems everyone has access to cultural literacy, provided the schools effectively teach it.

If we take into account the contexts in which individuals live and act, however, we can see that access may be hindered by lack of transportation, inability to buy school supplies, social conflicts, and a host of other concerns. Furthermore, economic and social issues not only affect the situation of individuals, but also the quality and resources of schools. Unequal distribution of resources leads to unequal educational opportunities based on class. Hirsch was perhaps well aware of such issues, but left them largely unaddressed in his arguments for a common curriculum based on cultural literacy.

Bizzell’s (1988) rhetorical view of literacy offers a potential alternative that recognizes the shifting, situated nature of literacy definitions. She suggested that the dominance of the great divide theory and of E. D. Hirsch’s theory of cultural literacy has led to the dominance of an academic literacy aligned with the Western intellectual tradition. The great divide theorists’ claim that a radical change in thinking occurs when people acquire alphabetic literacy contains a concealed bias that ignores abilities of people outside of Western, academic contexts. Hirsch’s claim that Standard English is the most “‘communicatively efficient’ form of the language,” according to Bizzell, does not take into account the very specific cultural factors that make it so. In other words, Standard English is not inherently the most efficient form of communication; rather, it makes sense in certain contexts. Bizzell’s “rhetorical perspective on literacy, which dialectically relates means of persuasion to audience's canonical knowledge” (p. 150), recognizes that the formal structure of a language or dialect does not determine its rhetorical potential; rather, it is the historical, social, and cultural context that does so.
My goal is not to vilify Hirsch, and I believe there is evidence in his writing that he supports multiculturalism, improving educational, social, and economic opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and offering the public school system options for reform. What I do want to point out is that, despite the problems it posed, Hirsch’s cultural literacy model offered a reasonable and cost-effective solution to school administrators in the midst of responding to claims about literacy crises and the failures of the public schools. His proposal for a “core knowledge curriculum” has been used for over fifteen years in hundreds of schools that, according to Hirsch (2009) have “narrowed the achievement gap in reading for disadvantaged students” (pp. 521-522). Bizzell’s perspective, however, reminds us that the successes experienced by these schools are successes according to a particular value system in which traditionally academic literacy is privileged. Choosing to promote this system is a political act with significant political implications no less problematic than suggesting that literacy learning should serve economic interests. It is quite unsettling that models like Hirsch’s are the ones gaining traction in educational policy contexts, while model’s like Bizzell’s go largely unnoticed. As I continue to review important work in our field throughout this chapter, I hope to suggest those theories that we can draw on today to, in Kazemek’s words, tell more persuasive stories to policy makers.

Changing Contexts

Scholarship in literacy studies during the 1980s (e.g., Scribner, Scribner and Cole, Street, Heath) addressed culture in much different terms than did Hirsch. Demonstrating that literacy is

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5 For example, in *The Knowledge Deficit* (2006), Hirsch addressed such contextual factors more explicitly, arguing for social justice and recognizing the influence of economic and social inequity on academic success. As Cook (2009) noted, even *Cultural Literacy* exhibits Hirsch’s support for “multiculturalist educational agendas...on the grounds that they are intrinsically valuable” and “supportive of tolerance” (pp. 488-489).
a cultural phenomenon rooted in local social practices and norms, this work represents an important challenge to simplistic, skills-based, and even ethnocentric understandings of literacy. Scribner and Cole (1981, 1988) were two of the first literacy researchers to refute the notion that literacy is primarily an individual psychological phenomenon and the notion that there is a cognitive divide between literate and non-literate societies. Such notions, propounded by scholars like Goody and Watt (1968), suggest that literacy influences cognitive ability and promotes higher order thinking like abstraction and categorization. Scribner and Cole (1981) claimed that literacy is a cultural phenomenon, as evidenced by the Vai people in Liberia and their development of a phonetic script, which was developed locally and without any formal system of instruction and as a result did not adhere to the dominant Western notions of academic literacy. Much of the significance of their work lies in their claim that people who are not literate according to Western academic standards are not psychologically deficient, but rather work within a different set of social and cultural practices. Beyond this, though, Scribner and Cole’s work counters the assumption that literacy brings about immense societal change. The individuals in their study did not depend on literacy for social advancement; rather, individuals depended on social participation in order to develop literacy.

In this way, Scribner and Cole echoed Harvey Graff’s (1979, 1982, 1995) critique of the “literacy myth,” the assumption that literacy in and of itself will bring about individual and social advancement. In exposing the literacy myth, Graff argued that literacy has historically been considered an “independent variable that distinguishes modern, developed or developing, and advanced societies and individuals from the lesser developed areas and persons of the world” (1995, p. xxiv, emphasis in original). Literacy, in this light, is something an individual acquires and uses to promote and improve his or her well-being. The individual who acquires literacy can
gain productive employment and become an informed voter and a responsible, law-abiding citizen; the more individuals who possess literacy, in this view, the better off society will be.

Such a view of literacy has dominated public policy discourse about adult education since the 1960s. Congressional debates about legislative efforts from the 1966 Adult Education Act to the 1998 Workforce Investment Act reveal claims about the social, economic, and political possibilities that literacy offers, the importance of literacy for individuals’ economic independence and social mobility, and the need to improve national literacy standards. In reinforcing the literacy myth, policy discourse not only adheres to a simplistic understanding of literacy, but also promotes a simplistic characterization of literacy learners as skills-deficient. This characterization, in turn, often leads to negative stereotypes of “illiterate” adults as socially deficient and the tendency to, in Susan Lytle’s (1991) terms, “associate their deficiencies with images of homelessness and crime, poverty, and substance abuse” (p. 109). Lytle’s qualitative research on adult learners refutes prevailing public perceptions of adult learners as weak, incompetent, and dependent, perceptions that she claimed “do not match the adults who actually come to literacy programs, bringing with them self-concepts, interests, and literacy abilities as varied as those of any other group in the population” (p. 379). Citing the work of Fingeret (1983, 1989), Heath (1983), and Scriber and Cole (1981), Lytle pointed out the wealth of research demonstrating that adults engage in varied literate activity through complex, collaborative social interactions. In other words, these scholars demonstrate that individuals achieve personal and social outcomes thought only to be within reach of individuals with schooled competence in literacy.

At a time when definitions of literacy revolved around school-centered notions of reading and writing that limited such activities to discrete skills, Shirley Brice Heath (1983)
demonstrated that one’s literacy is influenced by a host of factors that fall outside the realm of school. What is more, our literacy practices are shaped by our interactions and relationships with a variety of people and groups. Heath’s work shows us that, in order to fully understand literacy development, we need to see literacy in action. More recently, Duffy (2004) critiqued popular views of literacy “as instrumental, a means for assimilation into the dominant culture, political institutions, and economy of the United States” (p. 227). While such a critique has been leveled by a number of literacy scholars (e.g., Brandt, Graff, Scribner & Cole), Duffy extended beyond pointing out the need to account for ideology in developing our notions of literacy and its power by underscoring that literacy learning is not simply a passive process, one in which people acquire literacy in order to “fit in.” Like Lytle, Duffy reminds us that people actively engage in their learning—they react, they respond, they reflect, and they make choices about texts and the ideas represented in them. Such work offers a stark contrast to the deficit models of adult learners dominating public policy contexts that shape adult literacy education.

Adult education scholars have also actively attempted to counter notions of adult learners as deficient and passive by engaging in research and theory highlighting the knowledge, experience, and critical capacity adults possess (e.g., Ilsley & Stahl, 1993; Kazemek, 1988; St. Clair & Sandlin, 2004). Much of this work is heavily influenced by Paulo Freire, who pointed out decades ago that the metaphor of nourishment is often implicit in adult education, fostering a digestive concept of knowledge; the curriculum and materials of such programs imply that adults are undernourished because of their illiteracy and must be fed the food of knowledge and skill (see Freire, 1970). This is damaging, he claimed, because the content of the curriculum significantly shapes learners’ views of their activities and of their capabilities and also shapes their sense of their place in the world, of their “relationship to the structure of the society” in
which they find themselves (1970, p. 208). Freire developed a theory of literacy and a pedagogy that encourage individual empowerment through critical thinking. He argued that “thought-language” is a crucial part of humans’ orientation in the world and leads to “the possibility of the act of knowing through [one’s] praxis, by which [one] transforms reality” (p. 205). In short, we “humanize the world by transforming it” (p. 205). Educational institutions often fail to recognize the ability of poor classes to know and create texts that express their own thought-language, a failure that results in part from notions of marginality that claim adult learners are somehow on the outskirts or outside of society. According to Freire, this ignores the fact that the marginal exist within and are oppressed within society. Attention to the societal contexts in which adult learners live and act reveal the particular ways they are oppressed as a result of their (perceived) literacy or illiteracy.

Furthermore, how literacy and literacy learners are understood, as well as how they are valued, changes according to broader ideological developments, resulting from changes in the perceived realities of everyday life, politics, war, economics, and so on. Brian Street’s (1984) ideological model positions literacy as social practice, embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. How people address writing and reading, according to this model, is rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being. Literacy is always contested, both in terms of its meanings and its practices, and accordingly particular versions of it are always ideological, always rooted in a particular worldview and in a desire for that worldview’s dominance. Deborah Brandt (2004) illuminated the twentieth-century transitions that ideologies of literacy underwent:

World War II changed the rationale for mass literacy. Literacy was irrevocably transformed from a nineteenth-century moral imperative into a twentieth-century
production imperative—transformed from an attribute of a "good" individual into an individual "good," a resource or raw material vital to national security and global competition. [...] If, as is widely acknowledged, World War II produced the technologies and products that would fuel the American economy for the next fifty years, it also gave the nation an approach to mass literacy that has been equally influential and long-lasting.

(pp. 485-86)

Brandt’s case studies in “Sponsors of Literacy,” and later in Literacy in American Lives, demonstrate that literacy and the status literacy education is expected to guarantee are not static. These studies reveal that, on the contrary, what kinds of literacy matter and what kinds of literacy institutions sanction in some way (e.g. by funding, by curriculum, by types of employment) change over time and across contexts. What the above quote underscores, though, is that during the early twentieth century literacy lost its explicit attachment to morality and came to be seen as a resource, a thing that individuals acquire.

While I agree with Brandt that understandings of literacy underwent a significant shift during the twentieth century, I argue that literacy has actually retained its status as a symbol of morality. What was lost in the transition to a resource-based definition was the explicit connection between literacy and morality. In turn, it has become more difficult to see the ideologies guiding our notions of literacy and expectations for literacy education, and in becoming implicit ideology becomes all the more powerful. Notions of individual’s skills and of literacy as a resource reinforce one another in a version of morality that is based on ownership of certain resources. An individual’s character is defined by his or her possession of the abilities to read and write. Literacy is capital, a marker of status, as are cars, clothes, and other material goods that signify one’s economic standing. Illiteracy, by contrast, signifies little education,
poverty, low-paid work, all of which in turn signify immorality, bad citizenship, and dependence. It then serves as grounds for exclusion from social and political participation; lacking literacy skills makes one unfit and unable to engage in all of the activities American citizenship should allow.

Brandt’s work speaks to the role of national forces on the literate practices of individuals in a variety of local contexts by highlighting the economics of literacy. Claiming that literacy is not just loosely connected to economics, but is itself an economic development, she revealed that literacy standards change according to shifts in the economic system. Literacy, Brandt claimed, is an economic resource that is promoted or withheld by sponsors, or more specifically, “organized economic and political interests,” who stand to gain something in the process. Since sponsors stand to gain from how literacy is promoted or denied to groups of individuals at different points in time, they compete over the regulation and suppression of opportunities for literacy. As Brandt explained, people pursue literacy because of the potential opportunities it offers for social and economic advancement. Sponsors, however, actively work to manage opportunities for literacy instruction because of “the value that literate individuals have in wider arenas of economic competition into which their skills are recruited” (p. 5). People who have certain kinds of literacy can fill certain needs that sponsors have. From this perspective, we can see that literacy does not create jobs, but, rather, jobs create demands for literacy.

While sponsors claim that literacy is changing, that the jobs of today’s information economy require “higher” levels of literacy than ever before, to paraphrase some of the policy hearings, sponsors do not communicate what that change means for literacy learning. In Brandt’s terms, sponsors’ economic competition with one another serves to “destabilize the value of existing literacy skills such that the ‘literacy crisis’ becomes chronic” (p. 207). In other words,
the literacy that a person learns in an adult education class might very well be outdated and less valuable to sponsors by the time he or she completes the program—indeed, the idea of “completing a program” is misleading. If literacy demands vary according to societal progress, changes in dominant ideologies, industry, context, and so on, then one can never really be “done” developing their literacy. Yet, this is precisely what adult education policy demands programs help individuals accomplish.

   The misalignment between sponsors’ literacy needs and individuals’ literacy abilities—and the perceived crises that result from this—stem in large part from the very focus on literacy as skills in federal adult education policy. Government policy, in other words, fixes a definition of literacy around which adult literacy curricula are developed, and these definitions have over the course of the twentieth century increasingly served the development of human capital. When policy and, therefore, practice fall out of alignment with employers’ needs, a “crisis” arises that leads to policy revisions, which in turn institutes requirements that ultimately modify practice.

   Conclusion

   Definitions of literacy are rooted in culture and ideology and thus infused with valuations and judgments, and investments in literacy education are likewise infused with valuations and judgments about the worth of literacy, as well as the abilities, character, and potential of those participating in literacy education. Theory and research on literacy, therefore, needs to account for the role of culture and ideology in literate practices. The New Literacy Studies (NLS), exemplified by the work of James Gee, Brian Street, David Barton, and Mary Hamilton, call for situated studies of literacy and for examining particular literate practices in local contexts. According to Street (2003), NLS
takes nothing for granted with respect to literacy and the social practices with which it becomes associated, problematizing what counts as literacy at any time and place and asking ‘whose literacies’ are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant. (p. 77)

Situated studies resist characterizations of literacy as stable by offering particular examples of literate activity that deviate from a supposed norm. In this way, such studies foreground the people engaging in actual literate activity, rather than a set of discrete skills possessed by (often idealized) individuals.

However, as Street noted, qualitative and ethnographic studies are currently unpopular in public policy contexts. Instead, policymakers have turned to “scientific” standards as a basis for funding educational programs and research (2003, p. 86). The success or failure of an adult education program—and consequently its right to funding—is often based on rates of program completion; program completion is determined by standardized tests that measure participants’ abilities to complete various tasks. This is not a new phenomenon; policy has long focused on testing as a means to measure program success. And it has done so despite scholarly arguments from the social sciences and humanities about the benefits of more far reaching qualitative research to offer insight into the contextual and historical factors affecting the belief in and actual promise of literacy.

The focus on basic skills, functional literacy, and standards for assessing both shifts attention away from the ideologies shaping discourses about literacy and literacy learners and, in doing so, gives more power to damaging representations of literacy learners that make them “vulnerable to stereotyping and dubious treatment from the state, as is consistent with their status as less productive and morally ambiguous figures” (St. Clair & Sandlin, 2004, p. 52). Such
representations have manifested quite clearly in late twentieth-century adult education policy aimed at welfare recipients. Leslie Rebecca Bloom and Deborah Kilgore (2003), in “The Colonization of (M)Others in Welfare-to-Work Education,” argued that “welfare reform discourses are self-justifying practices of violent colonization” (p. 369). In particular, welfare policies and welfare-to-work programs are dominated by a logic of colonization that posits the irreconcilable difference between poor mothers and the moral authority of the government and that masks attempts to assimilate poor mothers with the guise of humanitarian efforts. These programs focus less on teaching skills than on teaching participants to develop an employable identity. In the process, the childcare work in which mothers have engaged is rendered irrelevant. The mothering identity, in fact, is rendered by welfare discourse as resistance. Bloom and Kilgore’s example suggests not only that adult education policies and programs position literacy and job training as necessary to move people out of poverty, but that such education can significantly devalue individuals’ identities and social positioning.

A major goal of my project has been to determine how and why narrow conceptions of literacy education as the imparting of skills serving economic advancement persist in public discourse. A historical analysis of federal adult education policy provides the insight necessary for understanding the workings of the public policy making context. In search of such insight, I examine the historical events shaping adult literacy legislation, as well as the lawmaking process itself. Both avenues have to date been unexplored in our field’s scholarship. While writing studies scholarship includes much work on the literacy of adults in the context of higher education, in communities across the nation and the world, and in a variety of workplaces, the field has paid limited attention to the literacy practices of those adults who participate in federally funded programs and have done even less research on the development of those
programs. As I attempted to understand the absence of our field’s work on literacy from adult literacy policy, I realized that the policy arena has unique discourse practices, which do not easily respond to the theoretical and pedagogical discourses through which writing studies has developed complex notions of literacy as situated and context-dependent.

By examining in detail the congressional debates about adult literacy legislation, I call attention to multiple interests, discourses, and ideologies shaping the policy making process, as well as the notions of literacy that arise in them. My analyses are based a body of research methodology that includes critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 2003, 2005), new literacy studies (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984, 2003), and cultural historical activity theory (Irvine, Prior, 1998; Prior & Shipka, 2003). Though these approaches often rely on ethnographic field research, I use them to analyze textual representations of the congressional lawmaking and to conduct historical study of this context. Incorporating such methodological perspectives has allowed me to attend to broader economic, social, and political influences on public policy while also allowing me to disrupt normative ideas of literacy, to take these tools into the realm of legislative process of adult education policy making to create disruptions. My research ultimately gives me an opportunity to examine the discursive and rhetorical means by which policy makers reinforce and revise existing narratives about the purpose and practice of education.

This dissertation examines federal policy texts as material instantiations of the interests guiding how and what literacy has come to mean in American education. As I have suggested, the positive correlation between adult education and poverty alleviation supports deficit views of adult literacy learners and fails to examine economic, social, or structural reasons for unemployment. We have publicly been treating literacy in this nation as an element of human
capital and literacy education as essential to full participation in economic and social life. Both assumptions offer limiting conceptions of literacy and hinder people’s access to literacy practice and literate activity that will benefit them. In the chapters that follow, I trace the historical processes shaping adult education policy in order to illustrate both how the federal government reinforces certain conceptions of literacy and adult literacy learners through its policy, and how writing studies scholars can enter policy discourse and foster more complex models of literacy education.

In reviewing this research and integrating it with my own ideas about literacy education, I am concerned primarily with how this impacts writing studies and how writing studies scholars can impact literacy education broadly, both within and beyond higher education and college composition. I extend from adult education scholarship to connect conclusions from policy research to developments in composition, particularly the increase in calls for assessment and the persistence of expectations that composition is a service course. I extend from writing studies scholarship and claim that the field must reconceive its approaches to advocacy and its use of research in advocacy in order to effectively communicate with and persuade those in the public policy making context. Writing studies needs to help change public policy guiding literacy education at all levels because such policy has had and continues to have consequences for educators and learners that run contrary to what we find most effective for literacy learning. In order to effect such change, we need to pursue new avenues for conducting and publicizing our research.

I begin pursuing such avenues in the following chapter with an examination of key work on adult education in the early twentieth century and link prominent educational theories to the economic and political developments of the time. I review those educational theories and
programs shaping the mid-century enactment of federal adult education policy. These theories and practices of adult education grew out of a need to address significant social, political, and economic developments and such developments warrant our attention as well. Immigration, the Great Depression, and two World Wars no doubt had a serious impact on the role of education in the United States. Adult education was particularly important because it offered a way to serve the vast majority of those directly affected by these historical phenomena. Immigration required a way to integrate the newly arrived into society and this was manifested in Americanization efforts, English language courses, and vocational training; the Great Depression led the federal government to develop work relief programs that required vocational training for great numbers of recently unemployed adults; and the World Wars revealed what many considered inadequate educational levels of enlisted men, which prompted the armed services to develop special training programs centered on reading, writing, and arithmetic. Business and labor leaders, scholars and educators all wanted federal support, since such support would provide not just needed funds, but also recognition and stability. Yet each group had a different vision of the kind of program deserving national recognition. As scholars and educators reflected on adult education in journals and at conferences, it became evident that forming a coherent adult education system in the United States depended on the existence of a coherent sense of the purpose of adult education. Determining a coherent purpose, though, was no easy task and the efforts to articulate one reveal significant divergences between philosophies of adult education.
In 2006, the Adult Education Act celebrated its 40th anniversary. The Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) put on its website a variety of items commemorating the Act, including Dr. Gary Allen Eyre’s 6 “History of the Federal Adult Education Act: Federal Response to Adult Literacy,” presented at the 2005 National Conference of State Directors of Adult Education. Eyre summarized the history of federal involvement with the following statement:

The federal government has been involved in adult education for well over 200 years. The nature and extent of Federal attention to the needs of adult learners has varied over this period, but, from its earliest days, the government provided funds to establish, encourage, and expand programs to assist adults in overcoming educational deficiencies which would hinder productive and responsible participation in the life and growth of the nation. (p. 2)

Along with this narrative, the OVAE website also presents a timeline titled, “History of Adult Education in the USA: A Federal Perspective.” Therein, the Morrill Act of 1862 marks the beginning of the history. Along the way to the explicit adult education policy of the 1960s we see several milestones: the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act supporting vocational education; “1920’s English language programs for immigrants,” at the local level; Depression Era Federal emergency measures; WWII literacy testing of Army recruits and GED development; the

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6 Dr. Eyre served as executive director of the National Advisory Council for Adult Education from 1971-1982 and executive director of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education from 1982 to 1985.
founding of the National Commission on Adult Literacy in 1957; and the 1962 Manpower Development and Training Act. Another timeline includes even more milestones between the Morrill Act and the 1966 Adult Education Act; many of these were private sector efforts and phenomena, like the founding of the American Association of Adult Education in 1926 and John Dewey advocating a “practical education” in 1920.

Taken together, these materials and the others presented by the OVAE constitute what is intended to be the federally sanctioned history of its own investment in adult education. This is certainly not the only history of adult education, nor is it the most comprehensive history. It is, however, quite revealing of the government’s own account of its interest in adult education. While the OVAE might claim over 200 years of involvement, perhaps to strengthen public perception of consistent federal commitment to adult literacy, historians and adult education researchers claim limited federal involvement in adult education until the 1960s and envision the history of adult education developing quite apart from direct federal investment. Harold W. Stubblefield, for example, begins his Toward a History of Adult Education in America with the claim that “In the United States prior to World War I, a national—not federal—system of adult education was in place” (p. i). In other words, privately funded organizations were primarily responsible for advancing adult education at the national level. Further, the development of adult education in the United States was not as smooth and seamless as the OVAE documents suggest, but rather presents a multitude of interests and a range of often conflicting ideas about the purpose of literacy education in adulthood.

The history of adult education I construct in this chapter attempts to move beyond that offered by the OVAE in order to paint a fuller picture of why and how federal investment in this field developed. For writing studies, the history of “adult education,” and the federal
government’s involvement in it, typically begins in the 1950s, with the National Defense Education Act (1957), which had consequences for traditionally college-aged adults (i.e., those aged 18-22). When we move beyond this demographic and look at all adults, however, we can see that there is a different history, and a different point at which the federal government intervenes. Further, whereas the federal government itself might claim that its positive intervention dates back to the founding of the republic, there is evidence that its most significant intervention—one that lays the groundwork for the adult education legislation during the 1960s—begins with efforts to shape adult education as an instrument of social welfare during the Great Depression. These efforts are documented in three special issues of the Journal of Educational Sociology, which cover the Depression from near its beginning (1932), through its depths (1937), and into a period of recovery (1945) emerging from World War II. This chapter examines such work alongside existing histories of adult education to provide two insights: how the government’s investment in adult education foreshadows its scaled-up involvement in the 1960s “War on Poverty,” and the significance of ideas—in particular, progressive ideas—that were left behind as the government’s role in adult education became all-pervading. It is worth recovering some of these progressive ideas about adult education, for they are consistent with writing studies’ scholars notions of how literacy education for adults might best be conducted.

This chapter takes a look back to the state of adult education in early twentieth-century America at a time when the field was beginning to gain widespread, national recognition. This

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7 In particular, I draw on the historical work of Lawrence A. Cremin, C. A. Bowers, Robert A. Carlson, Harold Stubblefield, Patrick Keane, C. Hartley Grattan, Malcolm F. Knowles, and Joseph Kett. While their work informs my own historical rendition of adult education, it is important to point out that these historians focus on the longer history of private investment in adult education and say little about the development of federal policy. I thus hope to, at least in part, offer a complement to these existing histories by engaging with complexities of federal investment in adult education.
review of adult education can offer writing studies insight into the multiple educational philosophies, political movements, and social changes that shaped later notions of who should participate in adult education and why they should participate. While many adult education scholars worked throughout the early twentieth century to promote views of learning that situate individual experience within social context, federal policy maintained an approach to education that treated the development of individual skill as a means to societal improvement. A historical look at the adult education movement demonstrates that conflicts between progressive educational scholars over the purpose and practice of adult education potentially gave the federal government an opportunity to define adult education according to its own investment in supporting the existing economic and social order. In large part, this meant producing workers that would respond to the changing needs of business and industry.

While I acknowledge that private adult education efforts in the United States began much earlier, I will focus my rendering of adult education history on the twentieth century. It is during this period that we see a move from adult education as a primarily private endeavor, funded by non-governmental associations, to adult education as a primarily public institution, funded nearly entirely by the federal government. Military intelligence testing during World War I drew national attention to the educational levels of adults and, according to Samuel Halperin (2006), prompted legislators to introduce adult basic education bills beginning in 1918. Such policy was “promptly ignored” by Congress until the 1960s, at which time legislation set aside a great deal of federal dollars to support a national system of adult basic education (p. 2).

Organizations outside of the federal government, however, were interested in the prospects of adult education much earlier. The National Education Association formed a Department of Adult Education in 1924 to address illiteracy among both the native and foreign-
born and to secure a place for adult education in the nation’s educational system (Sticht, 2002). This agency worked with public schools and libraries to establish adult programs with public and private funding at the federal, state, and local levels (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). In 1926, the Carnegie Corporation began funding the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE) and continued to do so until 1941; this funding supported research on adult education and its dissemination in the *Journal of Adult Education*. Such efforts helped to popularize “adult education” as a form of study distinct from that offered at colleges and universities (Cartwright, 1945).

While it gained recognition as a field, though, adult education lacked a coherent mission, purpose, or system; any educational endeavor beyond compulsory secondary schooling and outside of mainstream higher education seemed to qualify as adult education. Even the American Association of Adult Education was unwilling to define adult education firmly, describing it generally in 1930 as

> [a]ny educational activity in which the individual voluntarily enrolls, does not consider such effort his major activity, is of post-compulsory age, centers upon a course of study, reading, or discussion that has continuity and leads to some definite objective and which can be reported or endorsed by some reputable and recognizable agency. (qtd. in Brown, 1932, p. 465)

Another very similar characterization was provided a year earlier by Dr. L. R. Alderman; appointed in 1933 as an Adult Education Specialist for the Office of Education’s Emergency Education Program, Alderman claimed that formal adult education must be “voluntary…taken during leisure time” and “somewhat continuous and consecutive” (qtd. in Brown, 1932, p. 465).
Given such broad definitions, early twentieth century adult education was quite varied in theory and practice. The array of educational outlets for adults included settlement houses, university extension courses, lyceums, labor union programs, YMCA and YWCA programs, Americanization programs, citizenship training, night courses at public schools, the Chautauqua institutes, and library sponsored programs. Early programs, such as those listed above, however, were not unified in their approach to literacy. Some programs were not at all concerned with literacy per se, catering primarily to the cultural educational interests of the middle classes. Those concerned with literacy education were interested in eradicating illiteracy and extending educational opportunity to those whom they considered to be disadvantaged or in need of remedial education. Aside from a few efforts, like those of Cora Wilson Stewart to offer reading instruction to adults through rural “moonlight schools,” much early literacy education was directed toward immigrants. According to Joseph F. Kett, “most American educators had assumed that the inevitable spread of public schools would banish illiteracy” (1994, p. 320). The WWI intelligence tests, however, revealed that this was not the case and heightened national attention to the literacy of native-born citizens. This attention led to an increase in adult educational efforts, many of which were shaped by the progressive approaches gaining popularity at the time.

A New Century: Progressivism and Americanization

At the turn of the twentieth century, progressivism gained popularity in politics, economics, and education as it challenged the concentration of wealth and political power in the hands of a small elite, as well as the neglect of social and economic concerns that laissez-faire attitudes had allowed (Bowers, 1967, p. 454-455). Maurice Berube (1994) offers an apt description of the resulting aims of progressivism:
At the heart of progressivism were efforts to expand democracy, sympathy for the immigrant poor, attempts to counterbalance the rise of unbridled wealth with the new industrialism, and a drive against municipal corruption. Specific goals included a fight against big banks and monopolies, regulation of railroads and the food and drug industry, a campaign for child labor laws and women’s suffrage, and an emphasis on conservation. (p. 1)

As the variety of these aims indicates, progressivism was not an entirely coherent movement; proponents of this philosophy had different interests in it and held different visions about how it would manifest in American political, economic, and educational reform. The lack of consistency in progressives’ views of society, individuals, and education led to adult education efforts that were in some cases exclusionary or assimilative.

Progressive ideology and the progressive movement in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century were influenced by an optimistic view of the individual that extends back to the Romantic philosophies of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Jean Jacques Rousseau. Though they called on the federal government to enact reforms, Bowers notes that progressives did so “for the protection of the freedom and the well-being of the individual” (1967, p. 454). Bowers further claimed that the commitment to individualism defined the progressive classroom as distinct from “traditional” classrooms that employed recitation and memory work. Bowers described the connections between progressivism and progressive education:

While progressive reformers were using the legislature to restore competitiveness to an economy that was becoming increasingly monopolistic and to revive democracy in city and state governments corrupted by city bosses and self-seeking political machines,
progressive educators were challenging an authoritarian and tradition-bound educational system to recognize the individuality of the student. (1967, p. 457)

The early twentieth century progressive belief in individualism found expression not only in child-centered education and the activity movement in elementary schools, but also in vocational or industrial education in secondary schools and adult programs. The prominence of individualism supported a cognitive, skills-based view of literacy, which in turn supports the positioning of literacy, and even literacy learners, as resources for economic development.

Speaking of vocational education, Harvey Kantor (1986) noted that liberal reformers wanted to maintain equal educational opportunity for all by offering practical courses relevant to the needs of a diverse student body, including working-class and immigrant students.

Individualism produced a major point of tension in progressivism generally, and in progressive education in particular. It was an unchecked faith in individualism divorced from social reform that prompted John Dewey to criticize child-centered classrooms in his 1928 presidential address to the Progressive Education Association (Bowers, 1967; Cremin, 1961). In progressive education’s early years, Dewey gave voice to the increasingly popular notion that the school should take on the educative responsibilities once belonging to the “family, neighborhood, or shop” (Cremin, 1961, p. 117). In doing so, he claimed, the school should abandon the traditional teacher-centered methods of instruction, which typically positioned students as passive receptors of knowledge. Instead, schools should focus on the “development of intellectual, social, moral, and artistic abilities” of students and apply a process-oriented, developmental approach to learning (Berube, 2000, p. 40). Such an approach would favor individual experience and innovation, which, as Dewey (1916) argued in *Democracy and Education*, is a means to societal growth.
At the same time, political, social, and economic developments prompted many Progressives to support theories of social responsibility and interdependence, offering a potential broadening of narrowly focused notions of skills development. Dewey claimed “the measure of the worth of the administration, curriculum, and methods of instruction of the school is the extent to which they are animated by a social spirit” (1916, p. 415). The first World War did much to shake Americans’ notions of their place in the world and revealed the interconnectedness of developments at home and abroad. The increase in industrialization and the mechanization of labor meant that more and more citizens were dependent on one another and on the economic structure for their well-being. As Thomas Nelson (1937) would later put it, a simple family breakfast “depends on the cooperation of workers in wheat fields, flour mills, giant chain stores, printing plants, radio stations, advertising agencies, steamships, railroads, delivery trucks, telephone offices, and banks” (p. 522). While supporting the growth of the individual, progressive educators like Dewey felt that in order to more effectively meet the responsibilities of citizenship in such an interdependent system, individuals should learn guidelines for working individually and collectively to accomplish both individual and social well being.

Progressives’ belief in social responsibility and social reconstruction manifested in part in immigrant education and efforts to help the foreign-born adjust to American life. Such efforts, however, reveal the thin line between adjustment and assimilation. While many attempted to recognize the individuality of adult immigrants, others exhibited an Americanizing fervor that ignored and often degraded immigrants’ cultural traditions. On the benevolent side of this movement was the settlement house, hundreds of which were established at the turn of the century, and which Robert A. Carlson (1970) described as the “altruistic” beginning of the Americanization movement (p. 443). The most famous of these is Hull House, founded by Jane
Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in Chicago in 1889. Addams, in her work at Hull House and in her writing, criticized Americans who held immigrants responsible for the harsh social and economic conditions they faced. Hull House and other settlements tried to ameliorate immigrants’ experiences by offering healthcare, industrial arts education, and reading, writing, and English language instruction (Sticht, 2002). Addams in particular has often been praised for her attention to immigrants’ ethnic heritage and for her focus on the individual needs of those she served at Hull House (Carlson, 1970).

While progressives like Addams aimed to help integrate immigrants into American society, others tried forcing immigrants to either conform to or stay away from society. Edward A. Ross, for example, advocated immigration restriction, his rationale coming from the eugenics movement and claims about the inferiority of southern and eastern European immigrants arriving during the early 1900s (Carlson, 1970). The eugenics movement in the United States certainly led to detrimental attitudes toward immigrants and their membership in American society, but the closely related social efficiency arguments perhaps had a more lasting influence on adult education. The North American Civic League was “founded in 1907 by those who wanted to continue America’s tradition as haven for the dispossessed and by a number of industrialists who wanted to maintain the flow of cheap labor” (Carlson, 1970, p. 448, emphasis added). John Commons promoted social control through education of immigrants and saw Americanization as the only way to ensure the stability of American society (Carlson, 1970). Frances Kellor formed the Committee for Immigrants in America in 1914 and used the concepts of conservation and efficiency to promote Americanization efforts, arguing that “a nation, a community, and a factory would gain efficiency by requiring a single language for communication and by encouraging like-mindedness in thought.” (p. 449) Such arguments influenced a variety of
organizations, including the YMCA, whose Americanization efforts shifted from humanitarian service, to social control, to social efficiency within a decade (Carlson, 1970).

The Science of Adult Education: World War I, Intelligence Testing, and Professionalization

Social efficiency gained momentum through World War I and raised interest in related educational efforts like vocational training. The rise in vocational training prompted increased attention to literacy as a basic skill necessary for productive employment. World War I raised public concern for illiteracy among the native born, as significant numbers of servicemen demonstrated limited reading and writing abilities. The intelligence tests used by the army provided a purported scientific basis for claims that great numbers of both American citizens and immigrants were illiterate. Wanda Cook (1977) noted “of all men tested for the draft, 25 percent were near-illiterate, that is, unable to read a newspaper intelligently or to write an intelligent letter” (p. 11). The Army was primarily concerned with the specialized training servicemen needed to carry out their duties and saw basic skills education as essential to such training. Ultimately, this reinforced and intensified vocational preparation as the focus and objective of government sponsored adult education. In the short term, though, the military’s use of intelligence tests gave national recognition and government support for the testing movement and the skills-based education it fostered.

An experimental Army educational program was set up in Camp Grant, Illinois, during the 1920-1921 school year. Highlighting this program as an important adult education effort, Z.T. Egardner wrote in 1922:

The General [Army] Staff and its advisory board agreed from the very beginning that increased military, industrial, and business efficiency presupposes at least a minimum of manipulative skill in the three R’s, and some training in the fundamentals of citizenship.
Since the great majority of the enlisted men were found to be deficient in both, it was decided that the vocational training of the army students should be supplemented by a course in general education. (1922, p. 255)

According to Egardner, the program broke with tradition by classifying men according to intelligence level, rather than number of school grades completed. Intelligence levels were measured by intelligence and mechanical interest tests based on those used during WWI. Additional progress tests were administered periodically to “objectively” measure the results of instruction (p. 260).

Egardner gave an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the program:

The Camp Grant experiment has undoubtedly demonstrated that courses such as the basic course in citizenship and similar methods in operation under more advantageous conditions than those which the army could provide, are bound to produce even more striking results. If introduced into our high schools and colleges, such courses and methods would prove to be intensely stimulating and produce, what our schools are frequently accused of not producing, a new social consciousness, coupled with civic responsibility and reflective types of mind. (1922, p. 267)

This concluding argument also promoted widespread potential for such educational programs. Courses like those offered at Camp Grant could not only extend into multiple educational contexts, but could also meet the demands for “efficiency and democratization” (p. 267).

While such programs failed to produce increased federal investment, they did help adult education gain increased national attention in the 1920s. The Carnegie Corporation founded the American Association of Adult Education (AAAE) in 1926, which furthered the trend toward professionalization of the field by organizing a grant system for adult education programs and
forming the *Journal of Adult Education* (Seigel, 1934; Sticht, 2002; Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). Through the journal and a variety of other research publications and conferences, the AAAE disseminated a wealth of information about existing adult education programs and pedagogical innovations in the field (Siegel, 1934; Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). It also promoted the use of the term ‘adult education’ in an effort to unite the many, disparate attempts at educating adults. The organization extended its professionalizing goals by supporting doctoral studies in adult education at Teachers College, Columbia and by sponsoring the research of Edward L. Thorndike. While doctoral studies established adult education as a field, Thorndike’s *Adult Learning* provided a scientific basis for claims that adults are as capable of learning as are children (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994).

As adult education expanded, it drew the attention of the *Journal of Educational Sociology*, which published a special “Adult Education” issue in 1932. The *JES* published several special issues per year and was considered one of the leading journals in education for practitioners and scholars. It ended up publishing special issues on adult education again in 1937 and 1945, making it a consistent resource for and influence on adult educators. As I discuss later in this chapter, these special issues on adult education also reveal the key concerns among academics attempting to promote various aims and visions for an emerging field of adult education.

Many of the articles in the first special issue on adult education in the *Journal of Educational Sociology* echoed the AAAE’s defense of adult education against assumptions that schooling should end after early adulthood, if not directly after high school. However, this issue also reflected educators’ concerns with extending the goals of adult education beyond the

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8 See Appendix B for a listing of articles printed in each *JES* special issue on adult education.
AAAE’s focus on liberal studies and into practical, vocational education. The 1932 issue of the *Journal of Educational Sociology* included five articles concerning the purpose and content of adult education, each revealing a proclivity for programs addressing all aspects of adult life and tending toward a broad curriculum that would encompass not only cultural, political, and spiritual development, but also vocational education. In “New Aims for our New Adult Education,” A. Caswell Ellis, for example, called for a well-rounded educational experience for adults. He first drew on the work of Edward L. Thorndike to refute the popular assumption that adults cannot learn effectively and points to the educational performance of adults in colleges and nights schools as further evidence against such an assumption. Instead, said Ellis, adults learn more quickly and exhibit greater comprehension than children. He argued that this is because human development entails “four mental youths,” the first from birth to ten years, the second from puberty through adolescence to about twenty-two years, the third from the twenties up to about fifty, and the fourth from the fifties until the end of life (1932, p. 472-73). Each of these “mental youths” involves the growth of new abilities and interests.

While part of the mission of adult education, for Ellis, should be to make up for the inadequacies of the education individuals received during childhood, this should not be its primary mission. Rather, adult education should be primarily focused on developing the capacities of adults in the later “mental youths” and should devise curriculum suited to them. He further claimed that

> Since the interests, aptitudes, and powers which education must develop are continually changing and presenting new opportunities for education even into old age, and since the personal, civic, social, economic, and spiritual environment to which education must help us adjust is also ever-changing and making new demands, it is obvious that education is a
The immense changes society continually undergoes cannot, claimed Ellis, be fully understood by the undeveloped minds of children and, thus, should be a part of one’s education in adulthood. Adult education should help the adult “increase his vocational efficiency, and adjust wisely to his physical, human, and spiritual environment through systematic study of the facts, principles, and problems in our family, civic, social, and economic life” (p. 478).

Francis J. Brown began his article, “Basic Principles Underlying Adult Education,” with the claim that “adult education is as old as civilization itself,” suggesting that limiting formal education to adolescence is a relatively new development. According to Brown, “[i]t was only when the artificial agency of society—the school—became crystallized and its subject matter formalized that education was conceived of as a process beginning at the age of six and ending at adolescence” (1932, p. 463). This argument reveals a sharp distinction between education and schooling, with the former considered, at least by Ellis and Brown, to be the more lasting and potentially more significant human endeavor.

Brown proposed a set of fundamental principles for adult education, which together characterize an adult education program that is at once cultural and vocational and at once individual and social. In doing so, Brown was attempting to encompass all of the disparate views of adult education at the time. He highlighted individual differences, calling for a “widely diversified program of education for adults,” claimed societal, industrial, and technological changes require “reeducation or continuous education,” and promoted adults’ development of cultural interests outside of work (pp. 466-70). This search for a cohesive vision of adult education continued over the course of the twentieth century, driven by the need for federal
funds. In 1932, proponents of adult education were beginning to look to the federal government for funding that would expand such programs. In order to get funds, they had to demonstrate not only the need for adult education, but also clear objectives for adult education.

Frank Lorimer and Spencer Miller, in the same 1932 issue of the *Journal of Educational Sociology*, demonstrated the tension between cultural and vocational education. Lorimer, in “The Brooklyn Adult Education Study” extended this concern by focusing on how participation in public life can be encouraged by appealing to the individual interests of adults. Since voluntary individual participation is, according to Lorimer, “the crucial factor in American cultural life,” adult education efforts should focus on building the knowledge and motivation necessary to such participation (p. 482). He seemed mainly concerned with the cultural and intellectual potentials of adult education. Miller also spoke to the importance of cultural education in “The Need of Education for Labor.” However, he saw such education as a necessary response to the increase in leisure time. He pointed out that new technological developments have increased production capacities while decreasing labor needs, thus shortening the workweek for those employed. Concurrently, advances in industry require a new set of skills and an understanding of the processes of industry. Because of this, he argued, workers need to be reeducated “to the machine age” (p. 509).

Those concerned with adults in the rural farming context also saw the value of combining some form of cultural education with practical, work-oriented training. In “Some Rural Aspects of Adult Education,” Kenyon Butterfield pointed out that “more formal and advanced types of adult education” are more readily apparent in the United States because the “problem of illiteracy is not so pressing” here as in other parts of the world (1932, pp. 493-494). He called for greater cooperation between schools and colleges and rural communities and also pointed to the
underdeveloped educational potential of country churches. The schools should foster a desire for continual learning and offer adults opportunities to fulfill such desire. He claimed programs should combine scientifically grounded materials with skilled leadership and adult learners’ experiences to encourage “sustained local group thinking” in rural communities (p. 497). In addition, farmers’ reading habits must be improved and extended. While he primarily promoted education that would extend beyond the practical application of fields of knowledge to daily work, he also avoided separating cultural and occupational education, especially for rural communities. Instead, he claimed adult education must “show farm people themselves how their work, their daily task, the job of being a farmer, may contribute more fully both to good citizenship and to their personal growth in mind and heart” (p. 499). Here, Butterfield echoed Ellis’ argument that a philosophy of adult education must be based on an understanding of both “the nature of the adult to be educated,” and “the nature of the environment…to which this education must help adults adjust” (p. 471). At the beginning of the 1930s, the need for such adjustment became more urgent as adults and their environment were facing immense changes brought on by the Depression.

Here Come the Feds: Depression, Recovery, and War

In response to the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed, the Roosevelt administration and Congress launched a series of legislative efforts to address the resulting widespread unemployment: the Civilian Conservation Corps was established in 1933 for single males aged 17-24 who were unemployed and whose families were on relief; the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was established in 1935 and enrolled 2 million people in classes on literacy and naturalization, public affairs, home and family living, general cultural education, nursing, hygiene and general education, trades, industrial and commercial occupations,
agriculture, vocational guidance and adjustment, and leisure activities; and the National Youth Administration was established in 1935 and provided educational opportunity, work experience, and placement services to over a million unemployed youths aged 18-24 (Kett, 1994; Stubblefield & Keane, 1994).

The Roosevelt administration’s New Deal reforms marked a massive shift in the role of the federal government in America. Not only did the Roosevelt administration position government as liable for the welfare of its citizens generally, but as Paula Fass (1982) noted, it also “injected the federal government into the educational arena in such a way that it not only exposed educational failures but defined their redress as a federal responsibility” (p. 41). This was not an entirely new idea, however, and it was a long-established popular faith in education that made it possible for the Roosevelt administration to involve itself in educational reform. Nearly a century earlier, proponents of universal schooling had maintained what Lawrence Cremin (1961) described as an “inextricable relationship between education and national progress” (p. 8). Horace Mann, superintendent of education during the 1850s in Massachusetts, according to Cremin, exhibited “a total faith in the power of education to shape the destiny of the young Republic” (p. 9). When Congress created a department of Education in 1867, one of the responsibilities it gave to this federal department was “to promote the cause of education throughout the country” and early efforts to do included the creation of a Federal Board for Vocational Education and the authorization of federal funds for vocational training in 1917 (Williams, 1937, p. 527).

These earlier developments paved the way for the New Deal advances during the 1930s; the Roosevelt administration could inject the federal government into the educational arena precisely because public education had already been deemed a governmental responsibility.
When troubles with military preparation, immigration, and employment were connected to educational inadequacies, the government could not avoid getting involved—the problems existed in an institution it established. Its response to these problems involved not just changing practices in the existing elementary and secondary school system, but also developing new programs for those already outside of this system. Such developments were facilitated by an existing progressive philosophy that valued equal opportunity for all citizens and improving the lot of the individual in order to improve society.

The post-Depression era saw a reconfiguration of the individual in progressive theory that likely grew from the many tensions among progressives about how the individual should be educated. In the 1930s and 1940s, a new generation of progressive educators rejected the child-centered movement for ignoring social responsibility and promoting self-interest. This move was in large part a response to the individualistic philosophies supporting economic and political independence, which no longer seemed viable as the stock market crash revealed the extent to which individuals’ livelihoods depended on the stability of an interconnected, networked system of production and consumption. The ideal of the “self-reliant individual…was to give way to a new kind of individual saturated with the spirit of public service and cooperation” (Bowers, 1967, p. 464). Liberal progressives envisioned a society organized around the needs of all citizens rather than around individual profits (Bowers, 1967). The government, for these progressives, was to play a major role in meeting the needs of society and in preventing the excesses of corporations by regulating industry. Part of this movement entailed a revision of progressive education. Bowers (1967) argued that some factions of this group turned to socialism as a basis for education and attempted to devise curricula that would encourage social responsibility and believed that doing so would more effectively lead to a coherent and
cooperative society. Seeing the educational system as a vehicle for social reform, these social reconstructionists called for a curriculum that would foster public service and cooperation.

In the years following the first special issue of the *JES*, the New Deal programs were well underway and the continuing economic depression indicated the need for such programs. The *JES* published a second issue in the midst of this context, an issue that demonstrated the recognition among adult educators, not only of their role in responding to the increase in unemployment, but also of the importance of government efforts to remedy such social crises. In his editorial for this 1937 issue, Francis J. Brown pointed out that this issue of the journal was meant to cover all administrative levels of adult education—federal, state, county, city, and rural communities. Brown claimed the major thread connecting each of the articles in this issue was “the increasing trend toward coordination of a vast variety of agencies and institutions conducting some kind of adult education” and the hope that the issue would “further stimulate the interest in such cooperative ventures” (p. 514). The articles in this issue seem to support cooperation with government; however, historians (see, for example, Stubblefied & Keane, 1994) noted the resistance by Morse Cartwright and other leaders of the AAAE to any federal involvement. Given the attention to government programs in this issue of the *JES*, we might assume that this journal provided an outlet for considering the benefits of public and private cooperation.

Earlier concerns with cultural and vocational education carried over into the 1937 special issue, indicating that the arguments for coordination were shaped by concerns about the purpose and focus of adult education. Thomas Nelson’s “Changing Concepts of Adult Education” specifically supported vocational education, leisure education, and personality improvement. Nelson did not reject cultural education, but wanted cultural education that was also practically
relevant to people’s daily lives and work. This was perhaps a redefining of culture; culture in this view is not the classical academic knowledge that was typically prized by the upper classes, but instead is political, economic, and social awareness. Nelson also reflected the impulse of the AAAE to remain fairly politically neutral, arguing that “the adult education institution…does not seek to be an instrument of social action; it leaves such matters to community and political organizations” (p. 524). Nelson did, however, suggest that government was partly responsible for the expansion of adult education and implied that it might have a continued role to play:

During the depression years the agencies of government have placed a great emphasis upon adult education. They have created a demand and a response as well as much machinery for a continuous and expanding program. This experience and momentum should not be lost. (p. 526)

While Cartwright aired his skepticism for federal involvement in adult education (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994), Nelson at least saw the benefit to the institutional structures developed by the government’s relief efforts.

Nelson was not alone in his support of federal involvement; in the same issue, Chester S. Williams reminded readers that the government actually had a mission to “promote education,” given it by Congress upon the institution of the Office of Education in the mid-nineteenth century. In his “Uncle Sam Promotes Education” Williams critiqued the government’s limited focus on vocational forms of adult education until the Depression. While “the Federal Government began ‘to promote education’ as a means of putting some of the unemployed to work and engaging others in a fruitful use of their leisure time” during the Depression, Williams recognized the temporary nature of such relief efforts and called for a permanent structure to take their place (1937, p. 529).
This need for a permanent structure stemmed from a sense that much of adult education was dispersed among a variety of uncoordinated efforts and programs. A.F. Wileden’s “State Organization for Adult Education” began by noting the difficulty of carrying out an analysis of the adult education system, since “even on the State level alone,…rather than having a system, we have a complex of adult-education systems” (1937, p. 535). His article thus provided summary assessments of the variety of state-level programs within that complex, including university extension, state short courses, radio, state library agencies, and special interest organizations. Carl A. Marsden in “A WPA Program of Adult Education, Schuylkill, County, Pennsylvania,” argued that despite the many critiques of it, the Works Progress Administration Adult Education Program had much to offer the field of adult education; it brought adult education into public consciousness and revealed that federal support does not preclude freedom and flexibility. As he claimed, the “lack of uniformity in that program throughout our great country [should] set at ease those professional educators who fear the Federal financial assistance to our public schools would mean the surrender of essential local prerogatives” (1937, p. 548).

Marsden reviewed several local programs in the county to demonstrate how each responded to its community’s needs. The New Deal educational programs perhaps allowed more opportunities to experiment with a variety of educational methods and to address a variety of local concerns; the government’s goal at the time was to provide immediate assistance to the unemployed by, for example, giving teachers jobs and unemployed workers the chance to take courses. The particular focus and curricula of these educational efforts remained under local control. For Marsden, the WPA programs proved that
adult education alone can stimulate that renaissance which is imperative if our democracy is to survive. Techniques must be devised to enable adults to discover their interests and needs, and opportunities must be provided to develop those interests and needs....We cannot afford it? We cannot afford to be without it! (p. 559)

Marsden’s comments forecasted the emphasis on the connection between national well-being and adult education that heightened at the onset of the Second World War.

The war put an end to the Depression and many of the New Deal programs along with it by creating a wealth of new jobs. It also transformed arguments for social reconstruction and interdependence, centering them more on democratic ideals and nationalist sentiments. Nelson’s concerns for good citizenship and democratic social action carried over into Paul H. Sheats’ 1943 *Journal of Educational Sociology* article, “Adult Education for Victory and Peace.” Reflecting WWII interests in the status of democracy in the face of competing political systems, Sheats argued that the national goal of maintaining the ideal of freedom and the survival of democracy depends on a program of adult education that complements political democracy with “a democracy of the spirit, a democracy of knowledge (p. 34). According to Sheats, in order to ensure a national community that understands and abides by the democratic principles of freedom and justice, adult education programs must move beyond a narrow focus on functional literacy and work to close the gap between the “intellectually rich and the intellectually poor” (p. 34). Literacy education alone would not produce citizens capable of informed democratic participation. The link between democracy and functional literacy was a tenuous one and needed to be enhanced by cultural and political education that would provide adults with an understanding of the principles of democracy as well as with basic skills for work.
Adult Education for Social Change

*The Journal of Educational Sociology* published its third special issue on adult education in 1945. In the editorial for this issue, Dan Dodson called attention to the vast social changes brought about by the Second World War. The war displaced millions of people, moving them out of their familiar occupations, living standards, daily habits, and even physical locales. As a result, argued Dodson, the nation needed a vast system of educational programs to manage such changes and prevent “social disorganization” (p. 1). Winifred Fisher’s foreword to the journal echoed the urgency of the editorial, saying, “adult education cannot help being mixed up with social action, because the most stable characteristic of life in the United States is change.” She noted the articles in this issue “deal with particular aspects of adult education for social change” (p. 3). Specifically, the articles dealt with issues of labor, personal adjustment, and community development. In 1945, then, we see less of a focus on the philosophical bases for adult education than the 1932 and 1937 issues and more of a focus on particular needs for adult education; all of the needs, furthermore, ultimately revolved around fostering social change and strengthening the democratic ideals of the nation.

Lindeman (1945) in “The Sociology of Adult Education” was concerned with making the argument that adult education is “education for social change” and that, thus, sociologists need to become heavily involved in the development of programs in this field (p. 8). Lindeman claimed adult education was important for the democratic experience in that it is both “a learning method” and “a tool for social movements” (1945, p. 10). As a method of “contemporary problem-solving,” adult education can inform such crucial issues as the future of the economy, the problem of racial discrimination, the democratizing of education, and the nation’s role in international affairs (p. 12).
Lindeman’s article reveals that adult education as a movement was continuing to be aligned with national, democratic concerns. Indeed, for Lindeman, adult education is necessary to the very survival of democratic society. The same was the case for Caroline A. Whipple, who claimed the future of the nation depended on a successful program of adult education. After reviewing post-Depression adult education efforts like the WPA and state supported programs in “Adult Education in the Public Schools,” she argued that while such efforts did not last, they revealed that education is a possibility for all adult citizens and need not be restricted to the foreign born or to “native-born illiterates”—“thousands of highly educated found they too needed to learn if they were to live intelligently in a time of revolutionary change” (1945, p. 25). Whipple called for a new program of adult education to “quicken the intelligence of the many thousands who are not academically minded” (p. 26). “Enduring peace and the well-being of our country,” claimed Whipple, “depend on the knowledge and understanding of millions of our people who do not have access to sources of learning” (p. 26).

At the same time that some scholars called for adult education to respond to and bring about social change, there was also a move back to the individualism characteristic of pre-Depression progressives. In the 1930s a socialist political philosophy shaped educational theory and liberal progressives viewed the classroom as a vehicle for social reform and called for curricula that encouraged collectivist democracy. This was quelled by the rise of nationalism in WWII, which challenged communist sentiments with a renewed faith in individualism as the root of a democratic society. Sarah E. Marshall, for example, connected social work and adult education in “Solving Individual Problems of Adjustment,” claiming adult education is an important resource for social workers. For social workers, according to Marshall, education is a means by which individuals “arrive at a more satisfactory personal adjustment” (1945, p. 36).
Social workers find that the variety of personal difficulties people seek help for can be addressed through educational opportunities of one kind or another, be it vocational training, reading and writing, or self-expression. Marshall noted that the Dressmakers Union Local No. 22 of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union in New York City, for example, “[r]ealizing how important it is for everyone to have satisfying and constructive opportunities for self-expression, and understanding how especially important such opportunities are for workers who must spend their days at monotonous machine jobs…provided a highly successful art school project for its members” (p. 37). For Marshall, adult education programs meet practical needs and in so doing support “enrichment of the individual’s life and the enhancement of his personal growth and development” (p. 38). It seems social change and social responsibility were to be brought about by focusing on individual development.

Conclusion: Progressive Revisions of Human Capital

Progressive education significantly shaped the development of American adult literacy education and continues to do so today. However, there exists a wide divergence between the elements of progressivism adapted by federally funded adult literacy programs and those promoted by scholars of and advocates for adult education. As I have reviewed above, part of the progressive educational mission in the early twentieth century involved cultivating individuals who were more attuned to their changing social context. Yet, in many cases, it also entailed a focus on individuals’ acquisition of discrete skills. The latter, as a measurable element of human capital, was more attractive to federal policymakers setting aside funding for adult education programs.

The history of individualism on which progressivism’s ideals are based is fraught with ethnocentric notions about the extent to which different people are educable. As indicated by the
Americanization movement and by proponents of eugenics and social efficiency, progressive individualism often promoted the rights and opportunities of select individuals. Adult education had long been primarily a white middle- or upper-middle class endeavor, as with the lyceums and the Chautauquas. Further, the articles in the *Journal of Educational Sociology* discussed above demonstrate that efforts reaching beyond this segment of the population were deemed remedial in one way or another. Education for immigrants was meant to bring them in line with mainstream American culture, to improve their living conditions, and to increase their employability. Similarly, programs for working class and poor adults were geared toward training them for jobs.

While progressivism has taken on various forms, some of which were highly suspect, this educational approach still offers us today some guidance as to how to productively engage adults in literacy education. The *JES* scholarship reviewed above, for example, suggests perspectives we can integrate into modern adult education that will draw attention to the multiple goals of literacy learning—goals that extend beyond the productive potential of knowledge and skills. Positioning adult education as a natural extension of schooling, as did the scholars publishing in the 1932 special issue of the *JES* would promote learning as a lifelong endeavor, rather than as a corrective for those individuals who failed in school or have been failed by the school system. This does not exclude from adult education those who seek to, for example, complete their secondary education, but it removes the stigma attached to doing so. As Brown (1932) and Ellis (1932) might argue, all adults have needs left unfulfilled by formal schooling, whether or not they have completed secondary or postsecondary education.

These needs, moreover, might extend well beyond basic literacy skills, workforce readiness, or the acquisition of educational credentials. Education and learning are highly
situated and educational goals can shift widely across contexts and from one person to the next. Characterizing adult education broadly as intended for the development of the whole person, not just his or her employment potential prevents limiting it to one particular set of needs—a set of needs determined from the top down by groups whose interests lie more in economic concerns than in education. Furthermore, adult literacy education should not just reinforce existing assumptions about what learners’ needs are, but should offer learners the opportunity to change those assumptions. Thus, introducing progressive notions of social change, like those represented in the 1945 special issue of the *JES*, into adult education policy and practice could not only give adult learners increased agency, but could also build awareness of the democratic potential of adult education.

The early twentieth-century professionalization of adult education as a field of study and teaching reflects a variety of educational theories that extend beyond the narrow federal policy perception of adult education as basic skills training (including cultural education, civic education, and lifelong learning). However, those forms of adult education that appealed most to federal officials were those that already aligned with existing federal education initiatives, including public education, vocational education, and manpower development, and which directly connected to employment gains received the most attention. Following World War II, Ambrose Caliver, as director of the U.S. Education Office’s Project for Literacy Education focused his efforts on adult literacy projects that, according to Amy Rose (1991), “equated human resource development with national defense, seeing that both peace and war demanded higher levels of skill and were predicated on basic literacy” (p. 6). Eisenhower, during his presidency at Columbia University, continued the focus on human resource development by forming a research project on “The Conservation of Human Resources,” which was primarily
concerned with understanding the “relationship between education and work performance” (Rose, 1991, p. 6). Throughout this period, adult literacy education centered on the basic skills of reading and writing took precedence over cultural or social change education, since basic literacy education was considered an essential means to the efficient use of human resources and because, importantly, illiteracy was seen as a major cause of unemployment and poverty. The following chapter further investigates the development of federal adult education policy, revealing how literacy as basic skills became a key factor in federal interests in economic progress.
In 1966 the National Council of Teachers of English and the Modern Language Association sponsored a conference on the teaching of English. The approximately 50 American and British teachers and scholars attending the conference at Dartmouth College responded to the emergent needs to define English and establish pedagogical approaches to the subject. As Harris (1991) described it, some scholars mounted discontent with the Harvard model of writing instruction that privileged the direct training in the formal rules of Standard English and promoted instead a growth model of composition that favored expressive writing. Others expressed interest in defining English as an “academic discipline,” a subject of study with a distinct body of knowledge (1991, p. 634). The resulting discussions, while reflecting intense conflicts over how to define and teach English, led not just to revisions of the study and teaching of writing but also to the formation of a new academic discipline. Since the Dartmouth Conference, composition scholars in the United States have focused on efforts to investigate the composing process, foster students’ authentic voices through personal, expressive writing, and ultimately understand writing as an activity worthy of study in its various forms and contexts.

The same year that our field experienced what “has symbolized a kind of Copernican shift from a view of English as something one learns about to a sense of it as something one does” (Harris, 1991, p. 631), the federal government was engaging in a much different effort to change literacy education. In 1966, Congress passed the Adult Education Act as Title III of the
Elementary and Secondary Education Act.\textsuperscript{9} Spurred on by Lyndon B. Johnson’s war on poverty, adult basic education became part of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964 and aimed to increase people’s employability by improving their English reading, writing, and speaking skills. Proponents of adult education had for years been citing this field as an important outlet for literacy instruction and vocational training and called for federal support to extend services to greater numbers of adults. The Adult Education Act solidified the government’s investment in education as a vehicle for economic advancement.

I begin this chapter with the above comparison because I think it was no accident that these developments occurred during the same period. Although the federal and academic efforts to change adult literacy education took off in separate directions, their coincidence demonstrates that written language ability—variously defined and at all levels of education—had become a national priority. Yet, it also reveals the sharp distinction forming between literacy in the academic context and literacy in the federally funded educational context. This chapter examines the evolution of early federal adult education policy and touches on concurrent developments in composition in order to reveal connections and divergences between the two. As I will suggest, public policy and national perceptions of literacy influenced composition—even if indirectly—and this influence is something we need to recognize and respond to today.

While writing studies scholars have looked at changes in the college curriculum during this period (e.g., Berlin, Connors, Parks, Soliday), we would profit from pulling back to consider the broader implications of policy changes for all adults seeking education, not just those pursuing it at a postsecondary institution. These federal policy developments reveal notions about literacy that gained public popularity at the same time that composition studies gained

\textsuperscript{9} A timeline of federal adult education policies, including year enacted and stated purpose, is available in Appendix A.
professional disciplinary status. At a time when composition scholars attempted to move college composition away from its status as a service course by promoting a more intellectually rigorous subject worthy of study in its own right, the federal government began instituting adult literacy programs that fit right into the service course philosophy. Adult education programs were funded, not because policy makers valued the study and teaching of literacy per se, but because they viewed adult education as one means for remediating so-called illiterate—and thus unemployable—adults, thereby creating a sufficiently skilled workforce and, in turn, relieving poverty and unemployment.

As the Cold War gained momentum during the 1950s, so did the U.S. government’s funding of military programs, the space program, and technological advancements, resulting in, among other things, the 1958 National Defense Education Act. As the “first comprehensive federal education legislation,” the NDEA “included support for loans to college students, the improvement of science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction in elementary and secondary schools, graduate fellowships, foreign language and area studies, and vocational-technical training” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Menand (2010) pointed out that the NDEA “put the federal government, for the first time, in the business of subsidizing higher education directly, rather than through contracts for specific research” (p. 66). The NDEA offered federal funding for educational reforms, university research, and curricular restructuring but primarily to the hard sciences. Departments of English were not the priority of such funding opportunities and, as Parks (2000) put it “the [National Council of Teachers of English] realized they needed to imagine a new relationship to national politics and the economy if their initiatives were to be funded” (p. 70). The organization made an effort to do so in 1958 by publishing The National Interest and the Teaching of English (NITE), which according to Parks, “links
instruction in English and composition to the United States’ growing economic and political power” and identifies composition “as a soldier in the Cold War effort to rebuild the United States” (Parks, 2000, p. 24-25).

Several years later, this positioning led, at least in part, to Project English, “a project added in 1964 when the Cooperative Research Program was amended to include English composition” (p. 70). While this project primarily focused on curriculum development for K-12 education, it relied on the expertise of post-secondary English faculty. Aside from the work of Project English, however, composition had limited connection to federal policy, which directed money toward efforts that would offer some service to economic, and in turn global political, growth. By 1966, composition scholars and teachers were unwilling to support such goals and had moved away from the sentiments expressed by NITE. According to Parks “the Dartmouth Conference would not endorse a vision of English studies that overtly supported Cold War political and economic goals. Nor would it justify English in terms of its effects on the national economy, as had NITE” (pp. 72-73). While members of the newly professionalizing field of composition distanced themselves from the economic demands of Cold War politics, however, adult literacy education gained federal attention perhaps because of its perceived potential to promote economic mobility.

In the federal policy context, literacy became positioned as one key element of the human capital essential to advancing an economic system in which the production of goods was quickly being overtaken by the provision of services. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 addressed the unemployment of workers displaced by automation by providing funding for retraining programs and unemployment compensation for those undergoing retraining (Kremen, 1974). However, it did not specifically address the relationship between literacy and persistent
unemployment. Investment in adult literacy education presented a potential means for increasing basic skills training among what was perceived to be a large number of American adults lacking the literacy skills necessary for employment. Ultimately, this led to a federal program based on an unquestioned view of adult literacy education as primarily remedial in nature.

The expertise that composition scholars had provided to secondary curriculum development through Project English was not sought out (nor offered) during the development of federally funded adult literacy education. Many composition scholars in higher education opposed the long-standing view that composition should either weed out or remediate students with limited experience with academic writing (Soliday, 2002). Such arguments are absent from federal policy discussions of adult literacy education. It is widely agreed that literacy, meaning the ability to read and write well enough to gain and retain employment, is desirable and illiteracy is undesirable. It is also widely agreed that education, beginning with such basic skills as reading and writing, can ensure economic mobility. Those issues causing contention include funding and the level of federal, state, and local jurisdiction over educational programs. That adult literacy education might be problematically positioned as remedial in nature was of little concern to policy makers, since, for them, remediation was one reason adult education warranted funding in the first place.

Launching a War on Poverty

At the same time that government leaders attended to economic, military, and educational developments, continuing racial inequality in each of these areas strengthened a growing civil rights movement. Arguments that wealth was distributed unequally along racial lines gave civil rights activists grounds to seek government intervention. As Levitan (1969) claimed, “the issue of civil rights inevitably led to the problem of poverty, for economic deprivation was an integral
part of the over-all discrimination and injustice suffered by [African Americans]” (p. 15). Citing an analysis of 1960 census data conducted by Herman P. Miller, Levitan noted that the income gap between whites and African Americans had not narrowed during the post World War II period. Kennedy had begun to address the relationship between economic and political discrimination in 1963 and pursued antipoverty legislation, planning to include it in his 1964 legislative proposals. After his assassination in November of that year, his successor immediately took up this task, endorsing and calling for continued work on an antipoverty program (Levitan, 1969).

Members of Congress had unsuccessfully attempted to pass adult education policy in 1962 and 1963. Carl Perkins (D-KY) introduced an adult education act to the House in 1962, after President Kennedy pointed to illiteracy as a national problem in his State of the Union address. Rose (1991) highlighted the competing interests revealed by the changing names of this bill, interests that diverged according to the bill’s purpose and the population it was meant to serve. While the bill was introduced as the Adult Literacy Act, this was found to be too narrow so it was changed to the Adult Education Act; however, the Office of Education found adult education to be too broad a category and the bill became the Adult Basic Education Act by the time it reached committee. Samuel Halperin noted “in a Congress long dominated by southern conservatives, ‘adult basic education’ became conflated with efforts by liberals and the growing civil rights movement to teach ‘Negroes’ how to pass the literacy tests that southern states had erected as effective barriers to the exercise of voting rights” (2006, p. 2). This perspective effectively hindered the passage of any adult education legislation.

Early in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson launched an antipoverty campaign that would overshadow such conservative views of adult basic education by directing national attention
toward creating a more affluent society, or at least assisting those members of society who still remained in poverty. President Johnson’s State of the Union address that year announced his vision for a “Great Society,” signaling an immense change in government involvement in the social welfare of the nation. According to Milkis (2005), such an executive vision represented the height of presidential government, in which major policies “were conceived in the White House, hastened through Congress by the extraordinary legislative skill of the president and his sophisticated legislative liaison team, and administered by new or refurbished executive agencies that had been designed to respond to the president’s directives” (p. 14). Adult education (both post-secondary and basic) was part of a number of federal initiatives that bypassed state rights. These initiatives were prompted not only by cold war efforts to speed through the typical bureaucratic structure to ensure the advancement of military and scientific research (Levitan, 1969), but also by civil rights efforts to end discrimination at the state and local levels in areas like employment, housing, voting, and education. Many policy makers opposed an increase in executive powers, claiming it would lead to a loss of state and local control, and this was particularly relevant for educational policy, which legislators carefully guarded against federal control. Johnson, however, wanted to bypass state governments and reduce state bureaucracy so that local governments would have more power to act in their communities; this is evident in his message to Congress on March 16, 1964, particularly when he emphasized “local plans,” saying his proposed programs “are based on the fact that local citizens best understand their own problems” and that “their components and emphasis will differ as needs differ.” Despite this argument, some members of Congress feared either too much federal control or a local abuse of federal money, fears that eventually led to the demise of Johnson’s war on poverty.
Adult educators were also wary of federal intervention for many of the same reasons. Morse Cartwright and the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE), for example, supported local control of adult education, rather than the development of a federal bureaucratic system. In fact, Rose (1991) noted that the AAAE saw adult education as a potential corrective to the failure of the federally dominated public school system. At the same time, many members of the field, according to Rose (1991), agreed that “any national recognition of adult education was good” and that federal legislative measures would raise awareness of and responses to adult illiteracy (p. 11). Johnson’s War on Poverty initiative proved a viable opportunity to move adult education further into the federal arena. However, adult educators’ hesitant support of federally funded adult education made it difficult for the various organizations to band together and present a unified front as adult education bills entered Congressional consideration (Rose, 1991).

The National Association of Public School Adult Educators (NAPSAE) and the Adult Education Association of the USA (AEA/USA) exhibited disagreements over what form of adult education should receive emphasis in federal policy. The AEA/USA disliked the emphasis on basic education, but lacked extensive lobbying abilities. The NAPSAE, by contrast, had a solid legislative program and its views of adult education thus had more impact on the Economic Opportunity Act.

As part of the war on poverty, the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act centered on solving the social problem of unemployment; part of the solution to this social ill was found in “Adult Basic Education Programs,” included as Title II, part B of the Act. Although it was a fairly small portion of a wide-ranging antipoverty law, adult basic education had officially entered federal territory. And, although private funding and academic study of this field continued throughout the twentieth century, federal intervention and funding significantly shaped public perception of
adult education, the forms of literacy education it encompasses, and the individual and national benefits it promises.

One problematic perception of adult education and literacy promoted by federal policy is that of illiteracy as deprivation. This perception links back to the progressive focus on adult education during the early twentieth century, some versions of which involved the idea that individuals lacking mastery of reading and writing in English were deprived of the full benefits of citizenship. Policy makers in the mid-century added on to this view of individual deprivation by calling attention to the national consequences of illiteracy. During this period concern shifted away from the advantages of literacy to the disadvantages of illiteracy, which included poverty and social maladjustment (Rose, 1994). As a result, the policies addressing “adult illiteracy,” have considered it through, in Rose’s words, a “lens of pathology, disability, and alienation” (1994, p. 5). In order to justify federal involvement in traditionally locally and state-run education, the “view of literacy as an individual disability was reinforced by the view of loss of valuable resources and production” (1994, p. 5). The disease of “illiteracy,” in other words, was not just an individual problem, but would affect (perhaps even infect) the entire nation and its economic development.

As I indicated in chapter 1, human capital theory significantly shaped mid-century concerns with education by connecting people’s economic productivity directly to their educational development; because education leads to an increase in skill, which in turn leads to an increase in productivity, investments in education are considered investments in human capital (Beder, 1991; DeSanctis, 1982). Human capital theory arose several times in Congressional debates during the early 1960s, including those on the Higher Education Act in 1965 (Congressional Record 8/26/65, p. 21876) and on Vocational Educational Opportunities in
1963 (*Congressional Record* 10/8/63, p. 18965). A Congressional debate on “Changing Demands on Education and Their Implications” (3/28/63, p. 5058) cited human capital theory at length. During this debate, Senator Morse (D-OR) submitted to the record chapters of a report by the same name, in which a section on human capital heavily cited the work of Theodore Schultz (p. 5059). On September 15, 1965, during debate of the Higher Education Act, Representative Curtis (R-KS) submitted to the record his testimony before the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee’s Subcommittee on Employment and Manpower; this testimony included extensive discussion of education as a form of human capital (p. 23995). By the time Congress began discussing the inclusion of adult basic education in the Economic Opportunity Act, the connection between education and economic mobility had been clearly articulated in the policy context.

As a measurable element of human capital, the skills-based notion of literacy was attractive to federal policy makers setting aside funding for adult education programs. Policy advocates rarely addressed literacy as activity rooted in cultural practice, instead defining literacy as a neutral, transferable set of skills. Characterized as such, literacy became a resource of governmental interest, a highly valuable resource in an economy increasingly dependent on information and services (Brandt, 2004). Literacy, though, was not positioned as just any kind of resource in 1960s policy discussions; literacy was specifically positioned as a form of human capital. It is important to recognize that, as Rose (1994) put it, “this human capital thrust was built into adult education legislation from the earliest time” (p. 11) because it highlights just how deeply rooted is the connection between literacy education and economic condition.

By focusing attention on education as the primary agent in economic advancement, proponents of human capital theory mask such factors as discrimination based on race, age, or
sex, and ignore other contextual factors that account for individuals’ economic advantages or
disadvantages. Beyond that, though, positioning literacy as a form of human capital strips away
those characteristics we would typically associate with ideology, giving literacy the appearance
of a neutral set of skills necessary for everyday life. Understanding literacy as neutral severely
simplifies it. Furthermore, it is precisely this simplification that allows literacy to be treated as
resource of governmental interest. The more literacy retains its status as a “thing” in policy
discussions, the more likely attentions will focus on the promise of literacy, the consequences of
illiteracy, and the need for more or less funds to support literacy education. Whether or not one
possesses this skill has significant consequences for his or her ability to function in society and to
achieve economic stability; however, only the presence or absence of literacy, not literate
activity, has significance. As a result, attention shifts toward the need for acquisition and away
from the implications literacy learning has for one’s social status and individual identity. On a
larger scale, this perspective obscures the multiple motivations driving literacy campaigns,
primarily the need to supply particular industries with appropriately skilled workers.

Ratifying Adult Education as Economic Opportunity

On March 16, 1964, both the House and Senate received a message from the President
(H. Doc. No. 243), in which he proposed the Economic Opportunity Act, specifying the creation
of work-study programs, community action programs, loan programs for farmers and small
businesses, and Job Corps—all to be directed by a new Office of Economic Opportunity. He
framed his proposed legislation within a narrative of incomplete national economic progress, a
narrative that he had solidified in his Great Society Program and war on poverty campaign
during the preceding months. This campaign included a series of speeches to a wide range of
audiences throughout the nation, including labor unions, business leaders, political organizations,
students, and activists (Zarefsky, 1986). By the time the Economic Opportunity Act made it to Congress, Johnson had already launched an extensive national campaign to declare war on poverty and rally public support for the cause (Zarefsky, 1986).

The president’s message prompted the introduction of anti-poverty legislation in both the Senate and House. In the Senate, Senator McNamara (D-MI) submitted S. 2642, “a bill to mobilize the human and financial resources of the Nation to combat poverty in the United States,” to the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare (pp. 5354-5355). In the House, Representative Landrum (D-GA) submitted H.R. 10440 and Representative Powell (D-NY) submitted H.R. 10443, both of which were identical in purpose to the Senate bill, to the Committee on Education and Labor.

Title II B of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 created the Adult Basic Education Program, the purpose of which was

to initiate programs of instruction for individuals who have attained age eighteen and whose inability to read and write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment commensurate with their real ability, so as to help eliminate such inability and raise the level of education of such individuals with a view to making them less likely to become dependent on others, improving their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increasing their opportunities for more productive and profitable employment, and making them better able to meet their adult responsibilities.

Adult basic education was perhaps one of the least controversial components of the Economic Opportunity Act. Congress demonstrated widespread agreement that education and training were necessary precursors to successful employment. Those few senators and representative who
addressed adult basic education in their statements of opposition did not disagree with the principles behind such a program; rather they claimed that it would duplicate existing programs, as would much of the Economic Opportunity Act programs. The debate was almost completely captive to the notion of literacy as serving human capital.

Despite its relatively small role, adult education’s presence in this bill further reinforced a functional definition of literacy that was bound to economic advancement. In a Congressional floor debate, Senator Bartlett (D-AK), for example, praised the adult basic education component, which he said would “develop the basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic...needed for modern life and work” (p. 16711). The adult basic education provision also reinforced assumptions that undereducated adults are trapped in poverty and thus represent a significant drain on the nation. In a House of Representatives debate on the Economic Opportunity Act, Representative Perkins (D-KY) said so explicitly: “large numbers of undereducated adults are dependent on public assistance, unemployment compensation, public and private charities, and their relatives” (p. 18214). Perkins elaborated on the consequences of such undereducation and, in doing so, offered a functional, skills-based characterization of literacy. Lacking the ability to “read, write, and do simple arithmetic,” said Perkins,

many [adults] are committed to a future of minimum earnings, recurrent or persistent joblessness, social dependency, and personal deprivation. Many are unable to cope with written instructions in connection with the use of medicine, the direction of traffic, the operation of appliances and equipment, and the completion of employment and tax forms.

(8/5/1964, p. 18214)

In his statements before Congress during debate on the Economic Opportunity Act in July of 1964, Senator Yarbourough (D-TX) clearly demonstrated the growing belief in education as a
resource of economic advancement. Speaking of “the frontier of economic development and growth,” he stated “the nature of this frontier...has changed from what it was in the early days when the will to work and a strong back, or a fertile imagination and a great deal of energy were all that one needed to get ahead” (7/22/1964, p. 16632). According to Yarbourough, the modern American economy requires “education and training” (ibid.). In addition to simply stating these requirements, he also clearly articulated the causal relationship between education, employment, and escape from poverty: “Escape from poverty today means following the road of education and training and jobs” (ibid.). His earlier statement that the bill’s emphasis is on “education, training, and jobs which will enable people to help themselves” (p. 16630) extends the idea that poverty is a form of dependence and that independence requires economic success. The goal of “helping people help themselves,” as well as the notion that providing literacy education will accomplish such a goal, carried through all of the federal adult education policies that followed in the twentieth century.

Adult education was caught up in a larger Congressional battle over the war on poverty itself and the federal government’s role in providing direct economic assistance and training to its citizens. Much of the opposition to the Economic Opportunity Act came from Republican members of Congress who disagreed with the level of executive power the law would allow. Representative Brown (R-OH), echoing the arguments of many other Republican members of Congress, claimed that the EOA was “loosely drawn,” “poorly prepared,” “poorly written,” and “badly documented” (8/5/1964, p. 18196). Because of the haste with which it was moved through committee, claimed the opposition, the law gave too much power to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), thus weakening state governments. The states rights issue was prominent during debate of the EOA and centered on the potential inability of states to actually
administer their programs, since the language of the policy was so vague in terms of state control and since most of the power would lie with the Director of the OEO (see, for example, Senator Javits, 7/23/64, p. 16712). Senator Lausche (D-OH) raised concern that, without appropriate language in the bill, local governments could wind up under direct federal control (7/23/64, p. 16713).

As Representative Watson (D-SC) pointed out during debate, some policy makers were also concerned that a lack of state authority in the law would allow too much local control. This concern is clearest in the opposition to the community action programs supported by part A of Title II (the same title that included adult basic education). Representative Watson claimed that Title II

would allow the so-called 'poverty czar' to completely bypass State and local government and pay part or all costs of any antipoverty program carried on by a public or private nonprofit organization. The implications of this title are unbelievable and unthinkable. [...] such action goes completely against the basic principles upon which this great Nation was founded" (8/5/64, p. 18201).

In large part, this section bypassed state bureaucracies in order to give local communities more freedom to determine what sorts of programs would most benefit them in their efforts to reduce poverty. The Republican opposition argued that this allowed too much freedom and too little oversight, which could lead to abuse of the grant money.

After passage of the Economic Opportunity Act, the opposition continued to voice its concerns and by 1966, criticism of the antipoverty programs abounded. In particular, conflict rose between a conservative establishment and civil rights activists that supported expanding the reach of the antipoverty program to address political and economic advancement among
minorities. For example, the National Center for Community Action Education, Inc. drew negative attention from Congress in 1965 when it proposed a program that would combine private and public funds to combat adult illiteracy. The program would have been led by James Farmer, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality. Congress denied funding for the program because many members believed Farmer would extend beyond adult education into “political mobilization of the poor” (Levitan, 1969, p. 87). While claiming to support an end to poverty, many Congressional members seemed to oppose increasing the political power of those citizens in poverty.

Early in 1966 Congress began considering reauthorization of the Economic Opportunity Act and, as the Congressional Record demonstrates, the progress of the war on poverty received mixed reviews from legislators. Under the EOA, adult education programs were authorized by the Office of Economic Opportunity; however, they were actually administered by the Office of Education. Each office had different interests in and knowledge of the programs receiving funding and with one office handling the money while the other determined how and to what programs it would be allocated, this situation prolonged the delivery of funds. Such logistic difficulties bring into relief the inflated assumptions about federally funded education’s ability to ensure economic opportunity.

The most prominent critiques in the House of Representatives were voiced by Representative Quie (R-MN) and Representative Goodell (R-NY). Out of the growing dissent among members of the GOP came Quie and Goodell’s “Opportunity Crusade Act of 1966,” an alternative bill that would abolish the Economic Opportunity Act and with it, most of the responsibilities of the Office of Economic Opportunity, since all of the programs covered by the OEO would be transferred to existing agencies. While adult education, then, would become an
explicitly educational program under the governance of the Office of Education, the kind of education promoted was one that served the interest of work, particularly for private industry. According to Quie, the Opportunity Crusade Act “would put the emphasis on jobs—not on make-work jobs, but jobs in private industry—so they could learn skills necessary to hold down the kinds of jobs which would make them taxpaying citizens who would be an asset to the country rather than a burden and taking from the tax revenues of the Federal Government” (3/7/66, p. 5013). Quie’s statement reflects the perception that the federal government should not provide direct assistance to citizens, a perception based on the assumption that citizenship rests on productive employment that supports both the individual and the country.

Ultimately, the Opportunity Crusade was an attempt by Republicans to end what they considered an excessive growth of federal power, too much of which was in the hands of the OEO and Director Shriver. Upon introducing the bill in the House, Goodell claimed it would “eliminate the waste and scandal and abuse that have come into the antipoverty program” (3/7/66, p. 5030). Senator Griffin (R-MI), introducing the same bill in the Senate later that year, claimed the “President’s lagging war on poverty,” resulted in wasteful spending, decreasing state and local power, and “Government handout-type programs, instead of genuine, self-help opportunity-generating programs” (7/20/66, p. 16380). Given all of these interests, it seems the Opportunity Crusade Act was less about literacy education than it was about promoting a specific vision of federal government. Or, perhaps more accurately, this example demonstrates that policy discussions of literacy education and the definitions of literacy employed in such discussions are considerably shaped by political motivations that often do not promote more effective educational programs.
The Adult Education Act

The Adult Education Act was introduced in the Senate by Senator Hartke (D-IN) on March 2, 1966 and his comments to the Senate upon introducing this bill included a number of rationales for its adoption: an increase in jobs filled by high school graduates and a decrease in jobs filled by those with only an elementary school education; the majority of the unemployed (64%) consists of those without a high school degree; “as the age level increases, so do the proportionate number of those who are undereducated”; and the fact that other legislation provided educational opportunities for children and college students. Possibly the most notable rationale, however, was the demand for officially moving adult education from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Office of Education and the public school system. It was clear that many legislators disagreed with the placement of adult education in the antipoverty program. The question was, where to put it? Because of the level of subject matter, positioned as “basic,” it seemed public secondary or elementary schools would be more appropriate than colleges, despite the fact that colleges arguably had greater experience with adult students.

Adult education was, to an extent, already being carried out by publicly funded school systems. Citing a 1964 report by the Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Manpower, Hartke indicated that too small a portion of the school systems studied offered adult education or adult basic education courses. The majority of adult education initiatives, by contrast, were led by community organizations, colleges and universities, churches, and business and industry and were primarily serving the better educated. According to Hartke, the public school system had a better chance of reaching the undereducated. In June of 1966, Hartke spoke to the Senate about the Adult Education Act, which at that time was under consideration by the Education Subcommittee of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. He submitted to the record an...
article that appeared in the Christian Science Monitor noting the “problems of the college and university in dealing with adult education through extension courses” (6/27/66, p. 14392). The article pointed out that government funding was being reduced for courses that did not make money by drawing an “affluent clientele.” Hartke’s perspective was echoed in the House by Representative Bell (R-CA), who introduced an amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act that would increase funding for adult basic education. He claimed “in the past, unfortunately, adult education has meant cultural and academic enrichment programs for middle and upper class adults who wished to learn new ideas and skills” (9/29/66, p, 24436). His amendment to expand funds under the Economic Opportunity Act included employment training and job counseling, special project funds, teacher training funds, rehabilitation of narcotics addicts, and expanded job opportunities for the “hardcore unemployed.”

While the Bell amendment to the EOA was rejected, much of its purpose was reflected in the Adult Education Act. In fact, the Bell amendment might have been rejected simply because it kept adult education within the jurisdiction of the Office of Economic Opportunity, which many members of Congress wanted to disband altogether. Robert Luke, executive secretary of the National Association of Public School Adult Educators, supported the transfer of adult education to the office of Education by amending the ESEA, since, he claimed, ABE is “so obviously an educational function, so necessarily related to state departments of education, so closely aligned in purpose to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act” (qtd. in DeSanctis, 1982, p. 12). He agreed with Rep. Bell, who suggested that adult education “does not belong in the Poverty Act because there are many people throughout the country that are not necessarily in poverty that deserve to have an opportunity for an adult education” (qtd. in DeSanctis, 1982, p. 13). The Adult Education Act, because it was part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
amendments, offered a much more popular means for expanding adult education. In the process, though, the relationship between education and work, as well as the status of literacy as a resource gained strength. Adult education, in other words, already carried a distinct connection to human capital and economic advancement.

During legislative debate on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act amendments in October of that year, Hartke stated that the Adult Education Act would make high school completion the standard for adult basic education, rather than the sixth-grade level because, as he and many others argued, a high school diploma was becoming increasingly necessary for employment and occupational training programs. Hartke wanted adult basic education to include education for adults who had not completed secondary education and also wanted to extend adult educational services to those most in need. Citing the consultation and support of NAPSAE and AEA/USA, he argued that “the vast preponderance of those engaged in much adult education are those who are already among the better educated” (3/2/1966, p. 4789). In order to extend adult education to more people, he proposed supplemental adult education programs, which would include occupational training, English language instruction and even parent education and citizenship training. While this component was removed from the final bill, the AEA did contain provisions for attaining a secondary degree as well as those for adult basic education, and special experimental demonstration projects and teacher training.

The Adult Education Act was signed into law in November of 1966 under Title III of the Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The stated purpose of the Adult Education Act is as follows:

It is the purpose of this legislation to encourage and expand basic educational programs for adults to enable them to overcome English language limitations, to improve their
basic education in preparation for occupational training and more profitable employment, and to become more productive and responsible citizens. (PL 89-750, Title III, Sec. 302)

One of the major differences between Title IIB of the Economic Opportunity Act and the Adult Education Act is the inclusion of definitions in the latter, definitions that more clearly articulated and perhaps more explicitly limited the scope of the law. Among the new definitions included in the Adult Education Act are “adult” and “adult education.” As with the Economic Opportunity Act, “adult” includes individuals aged eighteen and older; however, by defining “adult education,” the AEA adds the following requirements for qualification as an adult under this law: “services or instruction below the college level for adults who do not have a certificate of graduation from secondary school and are not currently enrolled in schools” (PL 89-750, Title III, Sec. 303).

The law includes a separate definition for “adult basic education,” further specifying the kinds of educational programs that qualify for funding. This definition focuses almost entirely on the connection between English literacy and employment:

education for adults whose inability to speak, read, or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment, with a view to making them less likely to become dependent on others, to improving their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increasing their opportunities for more profitable and productive employment, and to making them better able to meet their adult responsibilities. (PL 89-750, Title III, Sec. 303)

DeSanctis pointed out that “the language in the Act ‘to meet their adult responsibilities’ was deliberately vague. It was to be the basis for subsequent diversity in ABE curriculum development and would provide the basic ingredient for more expansive interpretations of
literacy” (p. 14). At the same time, the definition of adult basic education as well as the purpose of the Act demonstrate that, as Rose (1994) argued, “from the very beginning adult education legislation was framed in terms of employment rather than as a basic human right” (p. 8). Both the definition and the purpose focused most explicitly on literacy’s role in obtaining and retaining employment; being employed, in turn, should improve one’s status as an adult American citizen by making them more “productive and responsible.” The definition of adult basic education implies that a good adult citizen is one who can not only hold a job, but also seize opportunities for career advancement. By pursuing such opportunities, it seems, one would exemplify the responsible adult; indeed, adult responsibilities seem to revolve around employment. The Act indicates that the abilities to speak, read, and write in English will grant more opportunities for employment, which will render adults more independent and responsible, both of which the policy suggests are desirable characteristics of an American citizen.

It is worth noting that the citizen imagined in this legislation does not reflect characteristics of active and critical democratic participation. The ideal American citizen, rather, was defined as a productive worker, and the goal of adult education had become, to a great extent, developing such an ideal citizen. This goal, however, was part of a larger vision for an adult education system that would complement the elementary and secondary public school system. To strengthen the development of this system, the Adult Education Act created the National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education, a presidentially appointed eight-member committee led by the Commissioner of Education. Support for such a committee partly came from the need to determine whether federal money was being spent wisely, and the NACABE was charged with reviewing the “administration and effectiveness” of the adult basic education program and to submit annual reports to the President. Beyond this, the committee
accomplished little during its existence until 1970, when it was replaced by a new committee—the National Advisory Council on Adult Education (discussed below); however, its creation did establish the expectation that adult education policy should fund research as well as instruction and, in turn, further defined adult education as an area of federal purview.

Adult Education Act Amendments

Adult education saw an increase in funding over the next several years, indicating continuing federal support for the endeavor. Congress amended the Adult Education Act in 1968, increasing state allotments from the $50,000 base allotment per state set by the 1966 Act to a $100,000 base allotment per state. This amount was further increased to $150,000 by the 1970 amendment. This increase in funding takes on additional significance when considered alongside the 1970 revised statement of purpose:

It is the purpose of this legislation to expand educational opportunity and encourage the establishment of programs of adult public education that will enable all adults to continue their education to at least the level of completion of secondary school and make available the means to secure training that will enable them to become more employable, productive, and responsible citizens.

While this amended purpose centers on occupational training, much like the 1966 purpose, it focuses more attention on the role of educational credentials on an individual’s status as an employable citizen. Added to the definitions listed in the Act is, interestingly, “academic education” which is defined as “The theoretical, the liberal, the speculative, and classical subject matter found to compose the curriculum of the public secondary school” (24). This alignment with public school education along with the revised definition of “adult” from eighteen and older to sixteen and older, meant the target population was expanded to include those who had dropped
out of high school. Rose (1991) claimed adult educators, led by the National Association for Public School Adult Education had always preferred the inclusion of secondary school completion because secondary level students were easier to retain and, we could assume, higher retention would boost program support and funding. The human capital perspective that more education resulted in higher earnings, however, might have also led to increased attention to high school completion. Given the new emphasis on citizenship and more specifically on the employability, productivity, and responsibility of individual citizens, it might be the case that academic education as it is represented in the public secondary school was found to promote the development of citizens called for in the new statement of purpose; and it could do so in a way that instruction focused on helping individuals “overcome English language limitations” could not.

While these changes indicate an alignment with the public school system, the creation of the National Advisory Council on Adult Education suggests a push toward developing a more independent system of adult education. Replacing the 1966 National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education, the Council was charged with conducting and disseminating research on adult literacy and with evaluating the effectiveness of adult education programs. Significantly, the Council was not led by the United States Commissioner of Education, but by a Council-selected chairperson and an Executive Director, giving it greater independence than its predecessor. The development of an adult education system also entailed expanding the target population, as indicated not only by the lowering of the age requirement to sixteen in the 1970 amendments, but also by the removal of “Basic” in the new Council’s title. According to DeSanctis, this term was removed “to minimize the stigmatizing perceptions of the Adult Education Act as a program for illiterates” (1979, p. 19).
The next round of amendments in 1974 expanded the target population even further by explicitly including funding for bilingual instruction in adult education programs. This addition coincided with the 1974 amendments to the Bilingual Education Act, which had been included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1968. As a result of pressure from civil rights activists and of the Supreme Court ruling in Lau v. Nichols, Congress amended the Bilingual Education Act in 1974 to institute stricter requirements for schools to provide instruction in English and the native language of students deemed to be of limited English speaking ability. However, as Stewner-Manzanares (1988) pointed out, the amendments emphasized the transitional nature of bilingual programs, meant to “prepare limited English proficient students to enter the regular classroom as quickly as possible” (n.p.). Similarly, the 1974 amendments to the Adult Education Act included the requirement to provide bilingual instruction for adults of “limited English-speaking ability...to the extent necessary to allow such persons to progress effectively through the adult education program” (NACAE, 1978, pp. 23-24, emphasis added).

The 1978 amendments included additional provisions for bilingual instruction in adult education, but linked this directly to employment-centered education by requiring that states coordinate this instruction with programs funded under Title VII of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 (NACAE, 1978, p. 28). The legislation implies that bilingual instruction is of value only to the extent that it satisfies the broader policy goals of program completion, acquisition of educational credentials, and employment.

Conclusion: Assessing Literacy Education

The statement of purpose of the Adult Education Act was again revised in the 1978 amendments, with the addition of “enable all adults to acquire basic skills necessary to function in society.” This purpose extends the consequences of literacy, as included under basic skills, as
necessary not only for employment and productive and responsible citizenship, but simply to “function” in one’s environment. In this way, literacy is attributed even more power than in previous statements of purpose; it is represented as a basic resource individuals need in order to perform everyday tasks.

The inclusion of function in the 1978 statement of purpose was likely influenced by the Adult Performance Level Project, one of the first large-scale assessments of adult literacy in the United States and one that promoted a functional definition of literacy. Conducted in 1971 by a team of researchers at the University of Texas, Austin, the project resulted in an initial report published in 1974 and a final report published in 1975. The APL expanded existing notions of literacy to some extent by claiming that literacy is not simply a single basic skill and that literacy “is a construct which is meaningful only in a specific cultural context” (Northcutt, 1974, p. 1). Definitions of literacy, therefore, change according to time and place and the state of technological development. As a result, the APL project promoted the move from a grade-level competency to functional competency.

While the project recognized the complexity of literacy and the challenges such complexity poses to large-scale assessment efforts, its reliance on functional competency carried a number of problematic assumptions, including the focus on literacy as primarily individual phenomenon. As I noted in chapter 1, literacy research (e.g., Heath, 1983; Scribner, 1984; Street, 1984) has demonstrated that individual, functional, skills-based notions of literacy overlook the wealth of social and cultural practices inherent in literate activity. The APL project, despite recognizing the role of culture on changing functions of literacy, maintained that literacy is a matter of using skills to complete tasks. In the initial report, Northcutt (1974) wrote that the APL project team based its study on the notion that “literacy is best defined as the application of a set
of skills to a set of general knowledge areas which result from the cultural requirements that are imposed on members of a culture” (p. 3). These general knowledge areas, for the purpose of the study, consist of “occupational knowledge, consumer economics, community resources, government and law, and health” (p. 4). Establishing such clear knowledge areas and the skills needed to perform in each (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, listening) was necessary for conducting such a large scale assessment of adult literacy rates; however, as Hunter and Harman (1979) and Kazemek (1988) pointed out this assessment is necessarily limited because of the definitions of literacy it employed. As a result, the claims it makes about how many adults can or cannot function effectively as a result of their literacy abilities are quite misleading. Hunter and Harman (1979) rightly assert that “any objectives used as a basis for measurement can be only as accurate and reliable as the judgments of the group that defines them” (p. 18).

The National Advisory Council on Adult Education’s 1978 publication of its first assessment of the federal adult education act offered no improvement upon the APL study’s limited notions of literacy. In fact, the report offered no discussion of definitions of literacy; the assumption that literacy consists of reading and writing skills was so established it needed no discussing. The report focused instead on the impact of federal money on the “lives of people” enrolled in adult education programs and the impact of the federal system on segments of the national economy. Data collection for this study consisted of surveys, hearings, and studies conducted by the NACAE. Overall, the report was positive and the NACAE committee ultimately claimed that the program does change the lives of participants and their families and benefits the economic health of the nation. According to the authors, a review of over 30 national, state, and local adult education evaluation reports revealed that “increased numbers of enrollees are becoming more employable, productive, and responsible citizens” (p. 20). It should
also be noted, though, that the authors do not provide details about these reports and how exactly they determine such an increase in employability, productivity, and responsibility, nor is it evident how they define those terms.

While the NACAE provided a primarily positive assessment of federally funded adult education, the report also pointed out areas for improvement. The authors concluded that the program lacked administrative effectiveness, claiming the bureaucratic structure prevents efficient dissemination of services to adult clients. Adult education, according to the NACAE committee, should have a broad management system for “lifelong learning,” giving it a status equal to elementary, secondary, and higher education:

The very bureaucratic structure of which the Division [of Adult Education] is a part prevents the most efficient and effective delivery of services to the adult client. It is apparent to the Council that no longer can programs for adult learning with the U.S. Office of Education operate as single activities. A broad management system must be developed which places categorical adult and continuing education programs into the concept of lifelong learning. (1978, p. 40)

This evaluation reflects the continuing attempt to separate adult education from public education and give the former an independent educational system. While publicly funded adult education has become an educational endeavor quite apart from public elementary and secondary education over the last thirty years, it has not retained the NACAE focus on “lifelong learning” that we see in this report. Instead, adult education has continued to focus on functional literacy, basic skills training, and workforce training—in short, the development of human capital.

The economic justification for adult literacy education carried with it an increased concern for developing assessment practices and such a concern is clearly evident in the NACAE
report. The authors maintained that more funding should be directed toward such an endeavor, pointing out that the organization received inadequate support from Congress and the administration to carry out the requirements of the AEA, particularly, a comprehensive review of its programs. This review would include program comparisons and evaluation procedures, which would allow them to determine the extent of program effectiveness. The report pointed to the need for federal assistance in developing uniform instruments and assessment processes to accurately measure the demand population. While the report suggests that assessment would simply help to determine who was being served and how to better serve them, it also laid the groundwork for linking program evaluation and eligibility for funding. For example, the authors claim that it is insufficient to merely track program compliance with federal requirements or judge program quality on the basis of high enrollments. Instead, “evaluation should identify program strengths and weaknesses” and should include analysis of cost and benefits, staff performance, organizational structures, and programs’ impact on clients (p. 11). The relationship between evaluation and accountability grew stronger during the 1980s when critiques of public education at all levels gained momentum.
Writing in 1985, Mike Rose aptly framed the “institutional language about writing instruction in American higher education,” which he claimed implicitly contain the following five ideas about writing:

- Writing ability is judged in terms of the presence of error and can thus be quantified.
- Writing is a skill or a tool rather than a discipline. A number of our students lack this skill and must be remediated. In fact, some percentage of our students are, for all intents and purposes, illiterate. Our remedial efforts, while currently necessary, can be phased out once the literacy crisis is solved in other segments of the educational system. (p. 341)

The similarity between the discourses Rose critiques and those guiding much of federal adult education policy is uncanny, and given the relative disconnect between postsecondary and federally funded literacy education, it suggests that perceptions of literacy cross such borders even when conversations are virtually non-existent. While composition and literacy studies have opportunities and audiences for opposing voices, however, the federal policy context has adhered to limited notions of literacy as consisting of skills, the lack of which potentially results in economic crisis.

In 1988, literacy scholars in the postsecondary context offered a potential alternative to the economic rationale for funding literacy education. The Right to Literacy conference sponsored by the MLA and the resulting text of the same name attempted to expand literacy work into a broader range of educational levels and to wider range of communities. In the introduction to the edited collection, Lunsford, Moglen, and Slevin note that the title “implies…that illiterate persons are not themselves dysfunctional but are, rather, the signs of a
dysfunctional society” (1990, p. 2). Such a perspective contrasts sharply with that reflected in the federal rhetoric about literacy and illiteracy during this period (or any period, really). While federal legislators and the administration continued to speak of literacy education as the solution to economic and social ills, Lunsford, Moglen, and Slevin argue that literacy is not in itself a panacea for social inequity; it does, in fact, guarantee little. It will not effect the redistribution of this nation’s wealth. It will not grant more influence or power to those who have been disempowered by their race, their class, their gender, their sexual orientation, or their nationality. (p. 2)

Although Right to Literacy might have provided a productive link between the work of literacy scholars and those crafting federal legislation, the fact that the former focused on a view of literacy and literacy education that critiqued (albeit somewhat implicitly) the view promoted by federal policy further divided the two contexts.

As I demonstrated in the last chapter, skills-based notions of literacy shaped federal policies from their earliest inceptions, allowing for a characterization of literacy as a means to social and economic improvement. Such a characterization gained even wider national recognition in the 1980s when the nation experienced a supposed literacy crisis. According to Demetrion (2005), by the 1980s, “knowledge became the basic skill needed in the postindustrial society” and “the pressing problems of inadequate schooling were…amplified with the fundamental societal, economic, and cultural changes forecasted in the new era” (p. 59). The amendments to the Adult Education Act during the 1980s ensured minor funding increases, but by the end of the decade it appeared to policy makers and the Bush administration, as well as national organizations like the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy, that this legislation was not doing enough to address growing concerns about a national literacy crisis
leading to a national economic crisis. As Amy Rose (1994) put it, “Due to a heightened concern with national productivity, the always implicit link between literacy and economic development was made explicit and once again seen as a primary aim of any adult education legislation” (p. 10). Following the upsurge in concern about the alleged illiteracy crisis in America, reaching its peak at the end of the 1980s, the Bush administration and Congress responded by claiming a renewed commitment to literacy, particularly adult literacy. This commitment culminated in the 1991 National Literacy Act, which, while focusing specifically on literacy (as opposed to adult education, broadly), did little to complicate earlier skills-based definitions. Instead, it shifted the purpose of federal investment in adult literacy more explicitly toward eliminating a perceived threat to national security, namely the threat of a workforce insufficiently skilled to sustain a globally competitive economy.

In actuality, the crisis publicized in the media and in public policy contexts had less to do with literacy rates than with perceptions about the relationship between literacy and a variety of social ills, including crime, poverty, drug use, and unemployment. Much of the blame for such social ills fell on the public school system, particularly on educators themselves. As I mentioned in the last chapter, debates about the Adult Education Act suggested that adult literacy education could serve as a corrective to the failures of public schools and as an instrument of economic progress and successful global competition. In the process, however, public policy makers increasingly made use of discourses about literacy that reflected what Rose called “a reductive, fundamentally behaviorist model of the development and use of written language, a problematic definition of writing, and an inaccurate assessment of student ability and need” (1985, p. 341). This era of federal adult education policy reveals a sharp deviation from work by composition and literacy scholars attempting to broaden notions of literacy and introduce learner-centered and
context-sensitive methods for teaching writing. Against the growing emphasis in composition on qualitative studies, holistic assessment, and the recognition that literacy is best understood in situ, federal discourse—both executive and legislative—centered on skills, standards, and proof of quality in education.

Concerns with quality dominated the educational policy context of the 1980s as studies like the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s 1983 *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* reported educational failures of the public school system. While focused primarily on elementary and secondary education, the report extended into the consequences of these educational failures on the literacy of working adults. For example, the authors suggest that because workers have received inadequate education, “23 million American adults are functionally illiterate” and businesses must “spend millions of dollars on costly remedial education and training programs in such basic skills as reading, writing, spelling, and computation” (p. 115). In response to such heightened concerns about literacy and the growing public perception of an illiteracy crisis, the Reagan administration, through Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, introduced the Adult Literacy Initiative in 1983 (Limage, 1986; Rose, 1991). Included in the Initiative’s efforts were “promotion of public and private sector involvement in literacy efforts, with a special focus on development of basic skills in the workplace,” “promotion of the Federal Employee Literacy Training (FELT) program, where agencies encourage employees to volunteer as literacy tutors,” “development, with the Department of Labor, of guidelines to identify workplace literacy problems and to establish programs to upgrade workplace literacy skills,” and “publication, with the Departments of Labor and Commerce, describing the changing workplace and economy, and suggesting means to provide workers with the skills needed by employers” (Irwin, 1991, p. 8). However, with limited
funding and an emphasis on voluntary and private sector resources, this Initiative was little more than that—an initiative.

The 1984 amendments to the Adult Education Act indicate the Reagan administration’s continued concern for adult literacy education, with the purpose revised to read that adult education programs will “enable all adults to acquire basic literacy skills necessary to function in society,” “to enable adults who so desire to continue their education at least to the completion of secondary school,” and “make available to adults the means to secure training and education that will enable them to become more employable, productive, and responsible citizens” (P.L. 98-511, Sec. 302). Though, as Amy Rose (1991) pointed out, this concern did not extend into financial support: “The early years of Reagan administration,” she wrote, “were the only times that the appropriations for adult education did not increase” (p. 10). According to Secretary Bell, speaking during a 1984 Senate hearing on the reauthorization of the Adult Education Act, the primary purpose of the amendments of that year was to “permit greater State and local flexibility over the use of funds, and at the same time, insure that the major focus of the program continues to be basic literacy for adults” (1984, p. 5). Defending the absence of funding increases, Bell claimed that the administration, through the President’s Adult Illiteracy Initiative, would pursue private sector support of adult education programs.

Jonathan Kozol (1985) was among the most critical of the administration’s lack of funding action for adult literacy, noting that the only funding provided under the Adult Literacy Initiative was a “one-time allocation of $360,000 for a pilot program using students on work-study grants for literacy action” (p. 50). Kozol went on to claim, in his nationally renowned book *Illiterate America* that
the government’s ‘initiative,’ therefore, was even more deficient than that timid word implied. It wasn’t a struggle. It wasn’t a campaign. Above all, it was not a demonstration that the federal government had finally perceived its own responsibility to sponsor and directly fund an all-out answer to a crisis which it had defined as being national in scope and danger. (p. 51)

At the same time that Kozol’s statements point out the inadequacy and even artificiality of the Adult Literacy Initiative, it also acutely demonstrates the crisis atmosphere developing around literacy. Kozol discussed several ways the nation is negatively affected by illiteracy, including the legal system, the military, schools and universities, businesses, and named the costs including welfare, unemployment, workers’ compensation, healthcare, and illiterate’s inability to fully understand their rights as citizens, consumers, and workers. Kozol promoted a form of literacy education akin to Freire’s, one that would promote critical consciousness and the active democratic participation of those who have been marginalized because of their illiteracy. However, he sought the support of those who stand to gain from such marginalization. Richard Ohmann’s (1985) review of Illiterate America in CCC points to this contradiction in Kozol’s agenda and also puts into perspective the larger systemic political issues surrounding the illiteracy that Kozol wishes to eliminate.

Widespread illiteracy and marginal literacy are a vested interest of those who benefit most from inequality, whether they recognize it or not. And here is the crux of a deep schizophrenia in Illiterate America, though perhaps not in its author's mind. Kozol wants to enlist not only professionals, but businesses, the military, the federal government itself, in his project. (p. 492)
In order to appeal to these groups, Kozol had to emphasize economic costs that result in measurable effects, like lost revenue and welfare expenses. In doing so, he highlighted the lack of functional skills as the problem, despite his attempts elsewhere in the text to avoid resorting to such a notion of literacy.

A report by the National Advisory Council on Adult Education demonstrates just how entrenched are skills-based notions of literacy (and all of the political implications of such notions), particularly within the federal bureaucratic structure whose members stand to gain economically and politically from programs that employ these notions of literacy. The Council’s 1986 report *Illiteracy in America: Extent, Causes, and Solutions* echoed much of the prevalent criticism of public schools’ presumed lack of standards for student achievement and aimed the majority of the blame on educators and their adoption of progressive educational philosophies. The authors provide a historical overview of the development of progressive education, indicating the variety of pedagogical and curricular approaches resulting from it. While they recognized such noble aspects of progressivism as the humanitarian effort to help Americans adjust to a changing “urban-industrial society” at the turn of the century, they ultimately blame progressivism for the decline of the traditional academic curriculum and pedagogical approaches. According to the report,

The most recent manifestation of this philosophy occurred in the 1960s when social concerns brought another wave of educational responses: team teaching, student contracts, “hands on” learning, a “relevant” curriculum, teachers as facilitators, student rights, anecdotal reporting. (p. 2)

While the report refers primarily to K-12 education, it is worth noting that such progressive approaches to education evolved in relation to postsecondary pedagogical developments, and
much research on writing by composition scholars focused on writers in the elementary and secondary context (e.g. Atwell, Dyson, Emig, Heath, Newell). Those pedagogical developments cited by the Council report were being promoted by compositionists who considered them positive steps in writing instruction, signs of the work of writing researchers to introduce more nuanced understandings of literacy and writing processes into educational contexts. For example, Labov (1970) and Smitherman (1977) studied non-standard dialects, Flower and Hayes (1981) initiated cognitive approaches to studying the composing process, Heath introduced the significance of cultural context on literate practice, and texts like Fulwiler and Young’s (1982) edited collection encouraged the use of collaborative classroom practices in the teaching of writing.

Reflecting the conservative position of the Reagan administration, the NACAE found such “progressive” moves responsible for the perceived failures of schools to produce sufficiently educated graduates. The Council report even critiqued Students’ Right to Their Own Language, linking NCTE’s “extraordinary policy statement” with the theory that “the spoken idiom is superior to the written word, and there is not real need for students to study the rules of their language” (p. 27). When literacy scholars convened for the 1988 Right to Literacy conference, part of their mission was to consider how their work might speak to those engaged in literacy education at the secondary level. Given the direction of public education as a result of federal critique, however, the theoretical and pedagogical approaches promoted by the Right to Literacy scholars would receive little support from administrators and certainly would not have been welcome in the policy context. Adult education, as a part of the federal education system, would not receive the benefits of this scholarship either.
Claiming that the “lowering of standards” initially “hid” educational deficiencies during the 1960s, the Council noted that “by the 1970s, when remedial English courses had become necessary for half of the entering freshman class of some colleges, unprepared college freshman and illiterate high school graduates were becoming obvious” (p. 2). What they did not take into account, however, was the changing nature of the college-going population as a result of many schools’ open admissions policies; the large number of incoming students who might otherwise not have attended college were not “illiterate” but, as composition research indicates, had social, cultural, and economic experiences different from those attuned to academic literate activity privileged in higher education. Yet, the question of whether schools and post-secondary institutions should privilege such literate activity went unaddressed, since academic literacy had, for the Council and many other political and educational groups, become the undisputed standard. The report continued,

…at the same time that professional educators and unions were gaining power, academic achievement was declining. Can we hold the schools responsible for that decline? Given the fact that professional educators determined programs, that teachers retained control over what was taught and how, and that the schools instigated the educational changes that proved to be so detrimental, the answer is yes. (p. 3)

In response, the Council called for a number of criteria that educators could employ to increase standards, as well as measures for holding schools accountable to federal investments. While claiming the recommendations are “preventative” rather than “remedial,” by providing support for increased accountability in the public schools the Council registered its support for increased accountability in federal adult education. This support was particularly significant as federal
concerns began to focus more heavily on generating returns on investments in adult education in the form of a more productive workforce.

Jump Starting the Economy with Literacy

The new sense of crisis, brought on in part by nationally publicized reports like *A Nation at Risk* (1983), *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century* (1987), and *Jump Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy* (1989), led to a federal reassessment of adult literacy policy. While *A Nation at Risk* argued that public schools were failing to sufficiently educate citizens and critiqued the progressive approaches it claimed led to a lack of standards in education (Demetrion, 2005), *Workforce 2000* argued that the labor market would demand workers with increasingly higher skill levels, lending greater emphasis to the need for increased accountability and standards in education. Forest P. Chisman’s *Jump Start* (1989) provided at least one potential solution by proposing greater federal investment in and a more coordinated development of a national adult literacy system, one that would specifically address the basic skills of the workforce.

The 1988 amendments substantially increased funding for adult education, providing higher allotments for existing programs and instituting workforce literacy grants. In the same year, Congress passed the Family Support Act and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills program (JOBS), the first federal policy linking adult literacy education to welfare reform. Hacker and Yankwitt (1997) claimed this connection “stressed the important role education and training had to play in the effort to move adults off the welfare rolls and into the job market, especially for adults with less than a secondary school education” (p. 110). Kilgos (2003) suggested that Congress looked to literacy “as a ‘panacea’ for a variety of social problems” and was “in effect, asking literacy providers to deliver services that would increase employability (p. 6). While the
1988 AEA amendments provided greater resources, the explicit focus on workforce literacy, combined with the introduction of the JOBS program, indicates that legislative priorities centered less on job creation and more on job training. This attention to job training both stems from and contributes to not only the perception of literacy education as a guarantor of economic development, but also the perception that illiteracy is a threat to economic development.

As I suggested above, Forrest Chisman’s *Jump Start* was influential in shifting attention to the economic imperative for literacy education and the economic consequences of neglecting literacy education. The report also shifted attention away from those perceived as entirely illiterate or unskilled and from nonnative speakers of English. Instead, Chisman focused on the “twenty million-plus” individuals with limited skills, many of whom are “ordinary working-class Americans” and who Chisman claimed do not qualify for existing job training programs beyond the relatively few funded under the AEA. Chisman called attention to the ineffectiveness of government efforts and claimed that federally funded adult education programs were intellectually, institutionally, and politically weak and fragmented. As a corrective, he proposed his own legislative initiative, the Adult Basic Skills Act of 1989, which would overhaul a number of existing laws including the Adult Education Act in order to focus more on workforce literacy, and which proposed funding provisions for a “quasi-governmental National Center for Adult Literacy,” for “innovations in training and technology,” and for increasing state control of and accountability for literacy programs (pp. iv-v).

While not introduced under his proposed title, Chisman’s proposal served as the basis for the National Center for Adult Literacy Act, a bill introduced by Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN) in February of 1989 in an effort to establish a centralized service for the administration, assessment, research, and teaching of adult literacy. The bill never made it beyond the committee
stage but its purpose and Cooper’s arguments reveal the growing concerns with nationally coordinated adult education that increasingly focused on upgrading the basic skills of the workforce. Citing Chisman's *Jump Start* (without saying so), Cooper called for increased federal attention to the “tens of millions” of adults who “are not the entirely unskilled illiterates who have received so much attention from the press” (1989, p. 2041). These are individuals who “cannot read, write, compute, solve problems or perform other basic intellectual functions well enough to gain or hold good jobs, to participate effectively in public life, or to meet the challenges of everyday living in an increasingly complex world” (p. 2041). Cooper claimed that these individuals, as opposed to the entirely unskilled, represent the “lion’s share” of the literacy problem and thus should receive the majority of federal attention. According to Cooper, because “today's service industries require increasingly higher levels of basic literacy as a precondition for employment, advancement, and economic growth,” individuals with limited skills cannot fill the kinds of jobs becoming available (p. 2041).

Chisman’s *Jump Start* likewise argued that the nation’s transition into an information economy would result in more jobs requiring higher levels of literacy. Providing a summary of the Project on Adult Literacy, which examined the Federal government’s role in supporting adult literacy, he offered both an assessment and recommendations, naming the economic need for a highly skilled workforce as a primary aspect of the nation’s concern for adult literacy. To the already prominent concerns of remaining competitive in a global economy and maintaining the nation’s standard of living, Chisman added that the retirement of the aging baby boomer population would present an unprecedented shortage of workers. According to Chisman, this compounds the issue of the “twenty-million plus adults [who] have serious problems with basic skills” to create a situation in which the United States becomes “a second-rate nation” and
follows “the path of other great powers toward national decline” (p. 3). Chisman certainly did not hold back on the crisis rhetoric, and his economically driven argument as I indicated above was particularly salient in the policy context. Chisman’s influence extended beyond Cooper’s act and according to Demetrion (2005) and the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, *Jump Start* served as the blueprint for the National Literacy Act of 1991.

The Bush administration responded to growing national attention to literacy in 1989 when, following several proposed education goals by the National Governors Association, President Bush held an “Education Summit” with the nation’s governors. The summit eventually led to the 1991 publication of *America 2000*, an educational strategy including six goals that the NGA and Bush administration agreed should be reached by the end of the 20th century. It is worth pointing out that many of the claims and proposals in *American 2000* bear a striking similarity to Chisman’s *Jump Start*, which was published two years earlier. The report uses a similar estimate of the extent of illiteracy and a similar economic rationale for addressing the problem, noting that “perhaps 25 million adults are functionally illiterate” and that “as many as 25 million more adult workers need to update their skills or knowledge” (1991, p. 6). Education goal number five dealt directly with adult literacy and echoed the global competitiveness argument used by Chisman:

> Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

(p. 6)

The inclusion of “rights and responsibilities of citizenship” extends beyond Chisman’s narrow focus on literacy for employment. At the same time, though, the educational strategy for addressing this goal included a “Recommitment to Literacy” that called for federal efforts to
strengthen performance standards and hold federally funded adult education programs accountable to such standards (1991, p. 20). This commitment would respond to the fact that “while more than 4 million adults are taking basic education courses outside the schools there is no systematic means of matching training to needs; no uniform standards measure the skills needed and the skills learned” (p. 6). Although human capital was always a part of adult education policy, the beginning of the 1990s saw an increasing concern with ensuring returns on investments in human capital.

Chisman and the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy once again contributed to discussions about the economic necessity of adult literacy education with the 1990 anthology *Leadership for Literacy: The Agenda for the 1990s*. In this text, however, Chisman and his colleagues devoted greater attention to the issues of assessment and accountability. In one of his essays, Chisman specifically argued that a federal coordinating body should assume the task of determining not only how to improve the efficiency of public adult education, but also those standards that would gauge program success:

A federal coordinating body for adult literacy should set measurable nationwide goals for upgrading basic skills and for improving the system by which literacy service is provided. And it should monitor progress toward those goals, refine the guidelines of federal programs in light of any barriers to progress it discovers, and, as appropriate, ask Congress to adopt new legislation to fill any gaps in literacy service it discovers.” (p. 239, emphasis added)

Chisman’s characterization of federal involvement in assessment is fairly optimistic in that he promotes goal attainment and broadening legislation to respond to unmet needs in adult education. However, by calling for the creation of a federal body to set those goals and to monitor programs’ abilities to meet them, Chisman advances a model in which the federal
government has greater control over the requirements for funding, and in which the federal
government expands those requirements. While funding under the Adult Education Act included
base allotments to states and required programs to serve individuals who, for example, had not
attained a certain level of education, Chisman’s model required programs to demonstrated
specified outcomes. This potentially diminishes local control and assumes that literacy education
can and should be uniform across all contexts.

Assessment procedures used by adult education programs include grade-level
measurements or assessments of learner performance like the Test of Adult Basic Education or
the Adult Basic Learning Examination. Judith Alamprese, one of the authors writing in
Chisman’s anthology, noted that most instructors find these tests inadequate and the tests are
often not administered properly. She called for the development of wide-scale measures for
assessing both learner outcomes and program effectiveness, arguing that “where standards exist,
different sets of criteria are being used to assess learner performance” which “makes the
collection of national data on program effectiveness nearly impossible” (p.111). Finding promise
in “the use of competency-based assessment systems in which the attainment of specific life-
skills is measured,” Alamprese seems to promote a functional definition of literacy linked
specifically to those skills needed in the workplace.

Functional definitions had been popularized in the 1970s by the Adult Performance Level
Project, and Chisman saw functional literacy as a way to broaden the definition of literacy
beyond simply “the ability to read and write” (p. 1). However, in his essay “Toward a Literate
America: The Leadership Challenge,” Chisman (1990) did not refute the skills-based definition
common in public and policy discourse. Rather, he claimed that additional skills should be added
to the list in order to account for the “intellectual basics” required to “function effectively in American society” (p. 2). According to Chisman,

A five-part definition of adult literacy—reading, writing, and verbal communication in English as well as ability in math and problem-solving skills—is accepted by most of the recent scholarly literature and is increasingly winning acceptance by policy makers and literacy providers as well. (p. 2)

While Chisman does not provide examples of the scholarly literature that accepts this definition, he is correct in his claim that policymakers have accepted it. The National Literacy Act of 1991 provided a definition of literacy that described skills quite similar to those in Chisman’s definition and emphasized increasing adults’ abilities to function in various contexts.

The National Literacy Act

Signed into law by President Bush on July 25, 1991 the National Literacy Act actually contained a broader purpose than had the Adult Education Act or any of its amendments. The purpose reads:

To enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults, to ensure that all adults in the United States acquire the basic skills necessary to function effectively and achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives, and to strengthen and coordinate adult literacy programs.

While still relying on functional literacy, the legislation at least expanded the goals to include more than economic advancement. The definition of literacy included in the legislation read:

an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential. (Sec. 3)
Some members of the adult education community saw the NLA as a positive step for revising notions of literacy and literacy learners. Quigley (1991), for example, claimed its definition meant that “for the first time illiterate adults are allowed to be people, not simply heads to be counted or units for job training” (p. 169). Despite the potentially broader focus of the law, however, the influence of human capital development still remained prominent and workforce literacy remained a key component of adult literacy education (Demetrion, 2005; Kilgos, 2003; Rose, 1994). Many of the law’s provisions, including its amendments of the Adult Education Act reflect a trend toward increasing concern not only with the role of literacy in workforce education, but also with the need to set requirements for program evaluation.

The major provisions of the NLA include research, coordination, teacher training, and evaluation. Research was encouraged in the AEA via funds allocated to the NACAE and to States for training purposes and special projects. These allotments, however, were minor compared to the funding provided by the NLA for research activities. Perhaps the most important part of the legislation for members of the adult education profession concerned with research and training was the creation of the National Institute for Literacy10 (Belzer & St. Clair, 2003; Demetrion, 2005), which was meant to “improve and expand” delivery system for literacy services, “including the conduct of basic and applied literacy research” and “provide technical

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10 While adult education professionals would claim NIFL contributed much to the field, including conducting and disseminating research on adult literacy, the organization was eventually disbanded in 2010. According to a statement from the Obama administration, “NIFL’s activities have had limited value in providing national leadership on literacy issues” and that its $6 million would be more efficiently spent by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, which would not require nearly as much funding for overhead (Department of Education, 2009, p. 43). Chisman and Spanenberg (2009) agreed that NIFL failed in the areas of coordination and leadership and that despite its nearly twenty-year existence, the federal adult education system remained fragmented. However, they argued along with many adult educators and researchers that a national organization is necessary and that even if NIFL was terminated, it should be replaced with something else. To date, this has not happened.
and training assistance for literacy services” (Irwin, 1991, p. 11). However, even in the creation of NIFL, we can see the push for evaluation and accountability. One of NIFL's duties included assisting “Federal, State, and local agencies in the development, implementation, and evaluation of policy with respect to literacy.” This in turn involved establishing “assessment tools and outcome measures,” determining both “the amount and quality of basic education provided in the workplace by businesses and industries” and “progress made toward the national literacy goals” (P.L. 102-73, Sec. 102).

The amendments to Adult Education Act basic state grants represent the most overt shift toward accountability. These amendments intended to “strengthen State evaluation requirements; increase attention to literacy problems within adult education; and strengthen teacher training requirements.” In addition, state education agencies were required to “develop and implement...indicators of program quality for use in the evaluation of program effectiveness under the basic State grant program” within two years of enactment of the law; state evaluation requirements stipulated that 80% of local grant recipients be evaluated after four years (the previous law required evaluation of only a representative sample of 1/3 of recipients). Finally, the Secretary was required to “develop indicators of program quality that may be used as models by which to judge the success of State and local programs” (Irwin, 1991, p. 4).

Discretionary grants were authorized for “national workforce demonstrations” which would help “unions and businesses provide literacy and basic skills to workers” (Irwin, 1991, p. 4). In addition, the NLA instituted the National Workforce Literacy Assistance collaborative at the U.S. Department of Labor. President Bush pointed out in his statement on signing the bill that this is one of the elements he was particularly pleased about, as it would “improve the basic skills of individuals by assisting small- and medium-sized businesses and labor organizations to
develop and implement literacy programs” (Bush, 2009, n.p). The increased attention to workforce literacy in this law suggests that the accountability requirements discussed above might focus more heavily on employment gains and the needs of business and industry. This represented a move further away from leaner-centered literacy education.

**Literacy According to Congress**

First introduced by Senator Paul Simon (D-IL) in 1989, the National Literacy Act underwent a number of revisions and was the subject of several Congressional debates before it was enacted in 1991. Below I discuss how notions of literacy as human capital were rhetorically constructed by drawing on arguments from several of these debates, and I integrate statements from Representatives and Senators to indicate how pervasive these perspectives were. The rationale for the bill was overwhelmingly economic, which is no surprise given the national thrust toward global economic competitiveness and given the historical basis for adult literacy education as a key element of human capital development. What stands out in these debates are the additional link between illiteracy and the economic costs of social ills resulting from illiteracy, as well as the explicit focus on functional literacy. The latter indicates a trend toward defining literacy as something that can be measured and foreshadows the thrust of policy toward holding federally funded adult literacy programs accountable for achieving (or failing to achieve) specified outcomes.

During debates of the National Literacy Act, members of Congress often highlighted benefits of literacy that extend beyond economic mobility or indicated the personal and social development that is hindered by illiteracy. However, such claims were almost always followed by arguments about the economic necessity of adult literacy education. For example, Representative Dale Kildee (D-MI) maintained that the services provided under the NLA “will
enable many adults to more fully participate in society and will improve the Nation’s ability to compete in an ever complicated world economy” (3/19/1991, p. H1803). In a debate the previous year, Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) claimed “Illiteracy is far more than an economic problem. It is a national tragedy” and proceeded to point to the impact illiteracy has on “personal success, independence, and happiness.” But he ends his discussion of the problem with an argument about how “illiteracy is crippling our Nation’s ability to compete in the modern world” (2/6/1990, p. 1339). This is also quite clearly demonstrated in the following statement by Representative David Price (D-NC), made during a 1991 House floor debate on the National Literacy Act:

> Illiteracy is a daily tragedy for millions of our citizens, depriving them of full participation in the life of our society. It is also a tragedy for us as a nation—and the bill before us lays particular stress on the impact that the education and skills of our workforce have on our Nation’s economy and on our ability to compete in the global marketplace. (3/19/1991, p. 6452)

While members of Congress seemingly value multiple goals for literacy education, including “full participation” in society, the thrust of their arguments, and the focus of the legislation about which they argue, emphasizes economic rationales for literacy and economic consequences for illiteracy.

Price’s statement indicates another perhaps more serious result of the link between education and economics. In short, this perspective holds citizens responsible for global competitiveness. According to Senator Chaffee (R-RI), “when employees are functionally illiterate, America’s security is in danger” (2/6/1990, p. 1340). Similarly, Senator Metzenbaum (D-OH) claimed “there is no way America can get ahead—or even keep pace—if our citizens are not literate” (2/6/1990, p. 1342). Needless to say, maintaining economic growth that ensures the
United States’ ability to surpass international competitors is a lot to ask of citizens. And placing the blame for (actual or potential) economic decline on those who seemingly lack literacy or require basic skills education also places a tremendous burden on literacy learners and educators.

The war metaphor begun in the 1960s by Lyndon Johnson carried through to the discussions of the NLA. Rather than a war on poverty, we have a war on illiteracy. Claims about the need to “attack illiteracy” or to “combat” or “fight” it abound in Congressional debates. (See for example, Congressional Record pp. S8711-S8715, 6/26/1991.) Furthermore, this new war was a response to a new kind of crisis atmosphere brought on by the economic recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Senator Paul Simon’s (D-IL) comments during a 1990 floor debate about an earlier version of the NLA indicate an even firmer relationship between literacy and economic growth than prior adult education policy by implying federally supported literacy education would lift the U.S out of its crisis:

Unless we were to produce a bill this year that would really aggressively move on the deficit—and I think that is not likely, real candidly—this bill will probably have more to do with lifting the economy of this Nation than any bill we are going to pass this year.

(2/5/1990, p. 1122)

Adult literacy education is explicitly responsible for addressing economic problems. Representative William Ford (D-MI) also extended this by introducing the notion of the “modern society,” which we are to assume places even greater demands on all adults and makes illiteracy all the more troubling:

The estimates vary, but it is generally assumed that about 30 million Americans cannot read, write, compute, or otherwise communicate competently to meet the needs of
modern society. The United States cannot expect to compete effectively in the world economy with such a heavy burden weighing us down. (p. 6452)

Ford’s use of the phrase “modern society” leads into concerns with global economic competition. In this competition, those adults incapable of meeting the needs of the modern society are burdensome to the point of holding the nation back from its economic potential.

Senator Simon’s remarks in the 1990 debate demonstrate that this perspective was not unique and was actually rooted in concern about monetary costs to the United States. Simon claimed that illiteracy not only negatively affects “human potential” but also “has economic costs to our society” and pointed out actual dollar amounts—reaching billions:

Some estimate that illiteracy costs over $200 billion annually in lost productivity, crime, accidents, employee errors, and extra training programs. The American Library Association estimates that functionally illiterate adults cost $224 billion annually in welfare payments, crime, job incompetence, lost taxes, and remedial education.

(2/5/1990, p. 1125)

Simon’s speech indicates that the supposed economic magnitude of the illiteracy crisis is, however, linked to social ills, particularly when he claimed “extremely high rates of illiteracy are reported among the welfare population, the unemployed, drug users, criminals and high school dropouts” (p. 1125). Earlier in his speech, he provided a bit more detail about these connections, suggesting a causal relationship between lack of education, unemployment, and drug use and crime. For example, he stated “the group that is by far the highest in the consumption of drugs are the unemployed” (p. 1123) and addressed “the whole problem of crime” by pointing to the following statistics:
Fifty-eight percent of juvenile delinquents have inadequate reading skills. Seventy-five percent of adult prison inmates are functionally illiterate. Eighty percent of prison inmates are high school dropouts. (p. 1123)

Simon was not the only Senator to make such connections. Senator Nancy Kassebaum (R-KS), speaking after Simon, insisted that the issue of illiteracy should be as high a national priority as the issue of drug use since “the two are not unrelated” (p. 1130). On the following day of debate, Senator Wyche Fowler (D-GA) asserted that “as our crime rate continues to soar, the fact that 75 percent of adult prison inmates are functionally illiterate cannot be ignored” (p. 1339).

None of the Senators gives a detailed accounting of the relationship between crime, poverty, and illiteracy nor do they fully support the suggestion that illiteracy leads to social ills. However, the rhetorical power of their statements certainly lends a sense of urgency to the problem, implying both that illiteracy is responsible for many social and economic problems and that literacy education, therefore, will solve our social and economic problems. Moreover, these Senators consistently bring attention back to the monetary costs of illiteracy, even highlighting (as Simon does in the quote above) the lost revenue resulting from social issues like crime and drug use.

Conclusion: Accounting for Workforce Investment

In 1990, the U.S. Department of Education submitted a “Report to Congress on Defining Literacy and the National Adult Literacy Survey.” This report was part of the requirement of AEA 1988 amendments that the DOE “submit a report to Congress on the definition of literacy” and “estimate the extent of adult literacy in the Nation,” a requirement that ultimately led to the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) of 1992. The NALS was an attempt to provide more detailed data on literacy rates in the United States, and while it did provide more detail, it
focused on but one notion of literacy. While not problematic in itself, such a survey serves as a precarious basis for federal education policy, especially when policymakers do not account for the survey’s limited perspective on literacy. The policy ends up equally limited.

Completed by members of the National Center for Education Statistics, the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, and the Educational Testing Service, the 1990 report is significant for its review of past work on literacy assessment and its explanation of the definition of literacy to be used in the NALS. The Literacy Definition Committee adopted the definition of literacy used in the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP): using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential. The Committee also decided to employ the three dimensions of literacy used by the NAEP: prose, document, and quantitative literacy. Using this definition the NALS surveyed 13,600 individuals aged 16 years and older in participants’ homes. Participants spent about an hour responding to diverse literacy tasks and to questions about their demographic, educational, and economic backgrounds.

Kirsch, Jungeblut, and Campbell publicized the results in a 1993 report titled “Adult Literacy in America.” In the executive summary, the authors criticized studies that attempt to count illiterates because such efforts oversimplify literacy as something people either do or do not possess. They claimed that the literacy problem and the range of solutions are much more complex and attempted in this report to describe the various types and levels of adults’ literacy skills and to analyze variations across major subgroups. They also explore the connection between literacy skills and social and economic variables like voting, economic status, weeks worked, and earnings. The results reported present a strikingly large proportion of adults in the lowest proficiency levels: 21-23% of adults (40-44 million of 191 million in the nation)
demonstrated skills in the lowest level of document, prose, and quantitative proficiencies and 25-28% (50 million) demonstrated skills in level 2. This works out to about two-thirds of the adult population; with results like this, who would not assume a literacy crisis?

David Berliner (1996) provided a quite different perspective on the NALS, emphasizing the problematic claims the authors make based on their findings. For example, he noted that “cognitive anthropologists and others have informed us that the tested performance of individuals does not always fairly represent the skills those individuals possess when those skills are actually required in situations with which they are involved on a regular basis” (p. 345). He further pointed out that “a 15-minute test cannot provide an accurate assessment of skills for an individual who is not used to formal testing” (p. 345). Such flaws, said Berliner, make the claims of such major news outlets as The New York Times and Washington Post seem quite overstated. These papers, along with a number of other newspapers and weekly news magazines condemned “the state of literacy in America and the failure of public education” (Berliner, 1996, p. 345).

Berliner and Biddle (1995), in The Manufactured Crisis, pointed out that examining the actual report of the NALS shows that “nearly 40 percent of these ‘illiterate’ persons were employed full-time; nearly 70 percent were reported to be ‘not poor’; over 80 percent did not receive food stamps; and approximately one-third were receiving regular interest from their own savings accounts” (p. 10). They also noted that of those deemed illiterate by the study, “26 percent had debilitating physical or mental conditions, 19 percent had difficulties reading print because they were visually impaired, and 25 percent were immigrants whose native language was not English—the language of the test” (p. 10). Berliner (1996) concluded that “It may not be illiteracy that causes poverty, but rather that poverty causes illiteracy. And if that is so, schooling is not a solution to the problem. Jobs and the economic viability of families are” (p. 348). While
I do not entirely agree with Berliner’s either/or thinking, I do agree that the overemphasis on literacy education as the ultimate solution is not only misguided but perhaps suspect. Schooling does have some impact, but it is certainly not a panacea, as Lunsford, Moglen, and Slevin noted.

In 1995, the Clinton administration proposed the Adult Education and Family Literacy Reform Act in 1995, which would have replaced the Adult Education Act. The purpose of the act included creating

a performance partnership with States and localities for the provision of adult education and family literacy services so that, as called for in the National Education Goals, all adults who need such services will, as appropriate, be able to (A) become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills needed to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; (B) complete a high school education; (C) become and remain actively involved in their children's education in order to ensure their children's readiness for, and success in, school.

Although this bill did not pass, it is quite similar to Title II of the WIA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998, which eventually did replace the Adult Education Act; the purposes of the two are nearly identical, though the Clinton bill included the notion that competing in a global economy is closely related to exercising one’s citizenship. Title II of the Workforce Investment Act included no such explicit statement; however, it might be the case that only three years after the Clinton proposal, such an assumption had become so common it did not need to made explicit.

A Senate hearing on this bill held in April of 1995 offers interesting insight into the transitions in policy discourse between the National Literacy Act and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and reveals many of the issues that made their way into the latter. Several claims
aligned with those that had been made in earlier policy discussions, including Senator James Jeffords’ claim that the bill was “designed to ameliorate one of the saddest indictments of our society—the fact that over 50 percent of the adults in this country are functionally illiterate” (Jeffords, 1995). However, others indicated increasing concern with developing a more efficient system, part of which involved creating standards by which federally funded programs would be assessed. For example, Augusta Kappner, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education in the Department of Education, named the following as the key principles on which the Adult Education and Family Literacy Reform Act was based:

streamlining, State flexibility, accountability for results, targeting to the States and local areas with the greatest needs, improving consumer choice among educational and employment opportunities, and promoting quality in many ways. (Kappner, 1995, p. 6)

These principles suggest that policy makers had less interest in program development than in pursuing standards that would determine returns on educational investments. The attention to standards gained ground when the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education met with 12 state directors of adult education, who called for the development of an accountability system that would help improve programs and policy at federal, state, and local levels. After another meeting the following year, at which the state directors clarified their goals for an accountability system, the OVAE began the National Outcomes Reporting System Project. This ultimately led to the National Reporting System, which was set in motion by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Belzer and St. Clair (2003) noted that, while the NRS requirements do not prohibit supplemental assessment practices, like portfolios, “...the research on and practitioner activity related to so-called authentic or performance assessment has all but ceased, despite strong
evidence that this approach to assessment more effectively reflects actual reading and writing processes, is more descriptive of learner strengths and challenges” (p. 15). Instead, assessment research has shifted toward “aligning assessment policy and practice with definitions of literacy, evidence-based research on the components of reading, and standards” (p. 15).

Assessment practices are an expected outcome of policy based on notions of literacy as human capital and of human capital development as the solution to unemployment, underemployment, and poverty. According to such a model, literacy education is an investment that should generate returns in the form of employment gains. This trend toward increasingly economic-centered literacy education policy and the assessment practices and accountability standards to which it has led have actually gotten us further away from adult education programs that will benefit learners not just economically, but socially.

In a review of policy, research, and practice on adult literacy education in the United States, Belzer and St. Clair (2003) pointed out the consequences of the trend that federal funding has followed since the 1990s:

Federal funding has started to flow toward certain types of adult education programs in a much more targeted way, and the freedom to set priorities and design innovative approaches is constrained at state and local levels by federal expectations. (p. 4)

Perhaps not surprisingly, these “certain types” include primarily workplace literacy or job training programs and the “federal expectations” focus on outcomes demonstrating employment gains. What I hope this chapter has demonstrated is the close link that developed between workforce literacy gains and a national image largely dependent on global competitiveness and economic superiority. Based on legislation and policy discourse throughout the 1990s, this
relationship places a great deal of responsibility on workers to meet national economic challenges by pursuing opportunities to develop their literacy skills.
Chapter 5
Capitol Talk about Capital Investments: Understanding Literacy Education through Congressional Debates

An educated workforce has become the most valuable resource in the modern economy.

*Senator Edward Kennedy, 1998*

You and I know that messages on paper or mediated online, spoken or gestured, carry many layers of meaning that, we hope, can reinforce to our students all that writing encompasses. That it is both a skill and an art, a vehicle for knowledge and self-expression, a way to engage in genuine dialogue in all disciplines throughout life, a way, even, to be transformed.

*Marilyn J. Valentino, 2010*

The two quotes with which I begin this chapter reflect very different perceptions of literacy education, very different contexts in which literacy education is discussed, and different characterizations of the providers and recipients for literacy education. Senator Kennedy made the above remark during the second Senate floor debate on the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Echoing the comments of many senators during this debate, Kennedy explicitly positions individuals as resources for economic growth—an analogy that reflects the human capital perspective dominating educational policy discussions throughout the twentieth century. Many literacy educators might disagree that literacy education primarily serves economic goals, finding Valentino’s characterization to align more closely with our goals for writing instruction. Because human capital theory characterizes education as the imparting of discrete skills assumed to be transferable across all individuals and contexts, it contradicts much of our field’s work on literate activity and the contextual, situated nature of written communication. However, we are still
confronted with this perspective today. The economic justification for literacy education increasingly shapes not only the conceptions of literacy with which students enter postsecondary composition classrooms, but the conceptions of literacy held by administrative bodies determining funding and accountability requirements for composition programs.

In her 2010 CCCC chair’s address, Valentino acknowledges the persistence of economic rationales for literacy education and suggests that we should respond to the current climate by more actively communicating with constituencies supporting such a rationale. Consistent with the accountability regime validated by Kennedy, first-year writing programs in particular have been experiencing increasing pressures to institute assessment practices that would demonstrate the level of success with which they meet a given set of outcomes. Valentino pointed out that “freshman composition is at risk once more” due to the well known issues of “decreasing state and college budgets, combined with increasing enrollments and the urgent cry to get all adults educated” (pp. 370-71). Part of the response to this “urgent cry” has included talk about instituting large-scale standard assessments. Gallagher (2011) recently noted that, while local assessments provide more effective pictures of writing practices, “standardized testing continues to make inroads in higher education, and upper administrators, policymakers, and the general public continue to imagine faculty and students as targets of assessment rather than generators of it” (p. 451). Both the process of determining desirable outcomes for first-year composition and the practice of assessing student writing are fraught with complexity that make meeting demands for accountability no easy task, even if we agree that meeting such demands are legitimate in the first place.

The rise in demands for accountability stems in part from the long-standing assumption that literacy is a form of human capital that ensures economic success and that investments in
literacy education should produce a return in the form of qualified workers. While college composition has only somewhat recently begun to face the accountability demands arising from this assumption about individual and national economic mobility, federally funded adult education programs have been responding to calls for evidence of returns on investment for quite some time. The history of federal adult education policy provides a particularly significant illustration of the development of the belief that literacy education can and should produce a skilled workforce, beginning with the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act and the 1966 Adult Education Act and into the policy of the 1990s, when workforce literacy development dominated public adult education. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the most recent development in adult education policy, the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which subsumed all prior adult education policy. Congressional debate about this Act demonstrates the discursive means by which the policy context shapes and reinforces the notion of literacy as a form of human capital. This example can in turn provide college composition scholars and teachers insight into how to respond to demands for a return on students’ and the public’s investments in literacy education.

To that end, this chapter examines Senate speeches given during two days of debate about the WIA, which included provisions for adult basic education and family literacy. After discussing human capital theory and its implications for literacy education as well as providing a brief legislative history of adult education, I focus on narrative as a key discursive means by which policymakers reinforce the relationship between literacy education and economic success, as well as the expectation that investments in literacy will bring about returns in the form of an educated workforce. I conclude by suggesting that we intervene in the policy making process by offering alternative narratives that convey more complex notions of literate activity and
demonstrate the limitations of relying on narrow definitions of literacy that lead to equally narrow assessment practices. While I echo Valentino’s call for “strengthening and creating new partnerships and communicating with policymakers and the public” (p. 374), I add that we should make connections with the many organizations, researchers, and practitioners involved in publicly funded adult education in order to disseminate more nuanced understandings of literacy.

Human Capital and Workforce Investment

As I have indicated in earlier chapters, human capital theory began shaping educational policy long before Kennedy made the above statement. However, as adult education policy transformed over the latter half of the twentieth century, it became increasingly centered both on expanding individuals’ productive capacities through basic skills training and on ensuring returns on investments in such training (Beder, 1991; Sandlin, 2009). During the 1990s, legislators began to focus more attention on developing national assessment standards that would allow them to hold programs accountable for meeting the goals of federal policy.

This objective was realized in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, which replaced the Adult Education Act and the National Literacy Act. Section 212 of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the WIA, established a “comprehensive performance accountability system...to assess the effectiveness of eligible agencies in achieving continuous improvement of adult education and literacy activities funded under this subtitle” (emphasis added). According to the policy, the purpose of this accountability system is “to optimize the return on investment of Federal funds in adult education and literacy activities.” While the goal of optimizing returns on investments is not problematic in itself, it becomes so when generating a return overrides the promotion of continuing interrogation of literacy and pedagogy and, thus, reifies existing problematic assumptions about literacy and pedagogy. As a case in point, section
231 declares that “In awarding grants or contracts under this section, the eligible agency shall consider…the degree to which the eligible provider will establish measurable goals for participant outcomes” and whether the program “uses instructional practices, such as phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension that research has proven to be effective in teaching individuals to read” (emphasis added). The standards emphasized in this legislation and used to measure program outcomes favor certain literate practices—for example, phonemic awareness, fluency, and reading comprehension; such literate practices, however, do not always reflect the practices that will ensure the goals set forth by the legislation. According to the stated purpose of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, those goals include the following:

(1) assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; (2) assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and (3) assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education.

(Workforce Investment Act, 1998, Sec. 202)

Despite the inclusion of family literacy goals, the overall thrust of the legislation resulted in a more employment-centered system (Hayes, 1999) and geared adult educational activities primarily toward job acquisition.

The WIA is especially notable for its consolidation of multiple funding streams for adult and workforce education and, in particular, its creation of the “one-stop delivery system,” which would offer educational services, job placement services, and career counseling at a single location. Such consolidation was meant to facilitate the transition from education to employment for adult learners, which were consistently referred to by legislators and federal officials as
“customers.” Adopting the language of free market capitalism, the policy frames adult learners as empowered, despite the restrictions imposed on them by the state of the economy and the job market across the nation. The bill—and the Congressional discussions preceding its enactment—neglected to address the causes of structural unemployment or to account for just what kinds of jobs individuals would acquire and whether their employment would generate enough income to improve their standard of living (Baptiste & Nyanungo, 2007). Despite this, many of the arguments made during Senate debates highlighted the great opportunities this bill would afford disadvantaged Americans—those disadvantaged because they presumably lack the skills needed to fill available jobs.

This argument was so pervasive that it crossed political party lines. One of the most remarkable features of the Workforce Investment Act is the level of bipartisan agreement over its basic tenets. Although it was years in the making, extending back to policy proposals in the mid-1980s, it passed in 1998 with very little opposition.11 Introduced in the Senate by Ohio Senator Mike DeWine, member of the Republican party, the bill’s cosponsors included liberal Democratic Senator from Massachusetts Edward Kennedy, Senator James Jeffords of Vermont, who at the time was a moderate Republican, and Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, who is a member of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party. The Congressional debates leading up to its passage include continual remarks from Representatives and Senators on the bipartisan efforts of their fellow Congressmen and Congresswomen. While there were disagreements about aspects of the legislation, calls for amendments, and even opposition to the entire policy, nearly all

11 The final Senate vote resulted in 91 yeas and 7 nays (2 not voting). The yeas included 45 Democrats, 46 Republicans; all of the 7 nays were Republican. The final vote in the House of Representatives resulted in 343 yeas and 60 nays (30 not voting). The yeas included 186 Democrats, 154 Republicans, and 1 Independent; the nays included 56 Republicans and 4 Democrats.
members of Congress agreed with the basic tenets on which it rested: the importance of keeping up with technological change; the importance of education in sustaining American economic superiority by supplying skilled workers to growing industries; and the importance of reducing federal bureaucracy in order to more efficiently train workers.

The Congressional Record and Narrative in Policymaking

As I analyzed the Congressional speeches from two days of Senate debates on the 1998 Workforce Investment Act, I found that narrative features were consistently used to express human capital theory’s central tenets. Speeches are not simply instruments for passing policy, but are contextualized within larger cultural and political narratives and, in turn, argue for particular worldviews. In the case of adult education and the Workforce Investment Act, Congressional speeches drew on common stories about welfare, education, employment, and the relationship between all three in creating economic advancement. Legislative discussions of the Workforce Investment Act demonstrate how naturalized the human capital perspective had become by the end of the twentieth century, despite the fact that scholars had been critiquing this perspective for at least two decades. This Congressional discourse offers an especially unopposed version of human capital theory as it is applied to education, and the Senate debates, in particular, offer telling examples of policy goals that stem from a human capital perspective, goals that continue to shape perceptions of and policies on literacy education at all levels today.

My analysis of the WIA Senate floor debates on May 1, 1998 and May 5, 1998 are based on the proceedings printed in the Congressional Record (CR), the government’s primary means of documenting the proceedings of Congress. The Congressional Record significantly shapes the narratives policymakers employ in Congressional debate. Jacobs and Sobieraj (2007) pointed out that members of Congress “make their speeches in full recognition that they are participating in
the creation of a jointly authored text that will serve as a multivalent document” (p. 6). The record of their speeches is available not only to their fellow politicians and their staffs, but also to constituents, lobbyists, and a host of both present and future audiences. In this way, Congressional speeches are, to use Judith Irvine’s terms “multiply dialogical” (Irvine, 1996). In other words, while speeches communicate to members of Congress present for debate, they also speak to a number of actual and perceived audiences, and policy makers participate in and respond to past, current, future, and even hypothetical conversations.

In order to highlight both the complexity of policy discourse and the active role that the legislative process has in shaping public notions of literacy, my thematic reading of the CR speeches draws on elements of critical discourse analysis. In particular, I adopt Norman Fairclough’s (2003) view of discourse as “representing some particular part of the world” and as “representing it from a particular perspective” (p. 129). Such a perspective further allows me to attend to the multitude of factors influencing individuals’ discursive activities, including “the institutional and organizational circumstances of [a] discursive event and how that shapes the nature of the discursive practice” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 4). For example, federal policymaking takes place within a formalized government system that shapes the kinds of practices carried out in the policymaking process; the organizational circumstances of, for example, floor debates in Congress give way to certain discursive practices and not others. The formal rules of Congressional debate declare that each Senator or Representative is only allowed a certain amount of time to speak and that any amendments to a bill must be voted on and the bill reprinted. The rules for introducing legislation declare that bills must be reviewed and voted on in Congressional committees before even making it to the Senate or House floor. And this is to say nothing of the amount of time and energy spent on attending to the demands of a variety of
constituencies, both public and private. Within this discursive structure, it would actually be uncharacteristic, even inappropriate to engage in extended discussions of the nature of literacy. Instead, the autonomous model of literacy provides policy makers an easily understood, fairly simple explanation for social ills like unemployment and poverty; it also provides a fairly simple solution to such social ills.

Examining such Congressional discourse also reveals how the human capital perspective is layered in and influenced by a variety of other discourses, including, for example, those of welfare reform, economic competition, and educational opportunity. Often, using these discourses entails (perhaps tacit) acceptance of particular values, beliefs, and perspectives about how the world works, as well as of the existing structure of societal organization and the power relationships that come with it (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). For example, when Senator Kennedy claimed, “An educated workforce has become the most valuable resource in the modern economy,” he was making implicit assumptions about what is an acceptable view of social and political organization; in this view, people are resources, people become valuable resources when they are members of the workforce, and the economic value of workers can be raised though education. This discursive act also implicitly suggests that we—Kennedy’s audience—should accept the social and economic roles assigned to workers in the “modern economy.”

Policymakers speak in a context that allows for little (if any) debate about the assumptions implicit in their discursive practices. This institutional context of policymaking in the United States at least partly fuels the persistence of those problematic assumptions embedded in prominent discourses, particularly human capital discourse. Concerns about the broad implications of such discourse take a back seat to policymakers’ concerns with appealing to their audiences in order to achieve multiple political objectives. This is not to say that members of
Congress are unaware of the rhetorical choices they make; on the contrary, members of Congress, with a lot of help from a staff of political aides, speechwriters, and interns, make many conscious rhetorical decisions as they speak to a number of both public and private interests, while also fulfilling their own interests in retaining office. As they engage in Congressional debate, legislators must create a meaningful and persuasive policy narrative..., but they must do so in a way that (1) connects with the larger set of policy narratives that together define their political affiliation, (2) allows subsequent speakers to adopt the basic narrative logic of their argument, and (3) reinforces their own political legitimacy and their jurisdictional authority. (Jacobs & Sobieraj, 2007, p. 2)

Part of maintaining legitimacy and authority entails appeasing multiple audiences by evoking recognizable and acceptable narrative discourse. Often, policy makers draw on what Sandlin and Clark refer to as “political master narratives.” While “abstract and somewhat diffuse” such narratives significantly shape social policy, “which has ideological and material consequences” (1002). In their discussion of how narrative works in policy discourse, Bennett and Edelman (1985), indicate that political communication, including speeches, often are not complete narratives but contain loaded references to “a set of overlapping scenarios featuring settings, characters, and actions not included in the text” (p. 165). Such practices are clearly evident in the WIA debates, during which members of Congress infused their speeches with issues like developing a highly trained workforce, addressing a skills shortage, and maintaining global competitiveness with values of self-respect, individual choice, and quality of life.

Narrative, thus, plays an important role in Congressional debate and serves as the primary organizing principle for Congressional speeches. Members of Congress—and those who help
author their speeches—make their arguments by drawing on existing narratives about the relationship between education, employment, and citizenship. They also employ feature of narrative discourse or storytelling to describe past, present, and future situations, both actual and hypothetical, in ways that highlight an impending danger or threat, its causes and consequences, and a legislative measure that will respond to the danger. I agree with Jacobs and Sobieraj (2007) that “by arranging characters and events into stories, people are able to develop an understanding of the past, an expectation about the future, and a general understanding of how they should act (p. 5). Assuming that stories about “what has happened or how the world works” (Amsterdam & Bruner, 2000, p. 111, emphasis in original) construct the facts of our reality and “establish what constitutes normative experience” (Sandlin & Clark, 2009, p. 1002), I see these narratives as key forces in shaping the vision of reality on which beliefs in human capital investment rest.

The following sections discuss speeches from WIA Senate debates, focusing on key themes that are made memorable because they are communicated in the form of narratives. I will focus primarily on the speeches of Senators James Jeffords (R-VT), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and Mike DeWine (R-OH), three of the bill’s main sponsors, though I will refer to quotes from other Senators when a particular statement exemplifies a thematic element or discursive practice. Part of my rationale for focusing on Jeffords, Kennedy, and DeWine is that they occupied more time on the Senate floor than any other senator. More significantly, however, I found that their speeches work together to emphasize key themes that would garner political support for the bill.

On the first day of debate, May 1, Jeffords opened with an overview of the legislation, highlighting the implications it will have for linking education and workforce training, responding to the changing economy, and coordinating the existing disorganized system of educational programs. While introducing all of these themes, Jeffords focused primarily on the
need to connect education with job training. Kennedy, who spoke next, spoke primarily about the “rapid pace of technological change” and its impact on the “modern economy.” DeWine then engaged primarily with the disorganization of the existing system and the need to decrease bureaucratic “red tape.” These themes were repeated and expanded on during the second day of debate, May 5. Although on both days several senators spoke in support of the bill or proposed amendments to the legislation, Jeffords, Kennedy, and DeWine dominated the floor, each focusing on education for employment, technological change, and coordination, respectively. To explicate each of these themes, I focus on the quotes that exemplify the arguments each Senator made, highlighting the discursive features that contribute to problematic conceptions of adult learners and of the goals of literacy education.

**Education for Employment: Developing a Workforce Training System**

This legislation incorporates job training, vocational education, and adult education—three programs. Last year we passed welfare reform, which has no hope of success unless individuals have the appropriate education and training to compete in the workforce.


On May 1, 1998, Senator James Jeffords opened debate of the Workforce Investment Act by naming the topic of debate for the day, using a third-person singular narrative structure in which he provided a setup, identified a problem, and proposed a resolution. More specifically, he highlighted the importance of the welfare legislation passed by the previous Congress, claimed that such legislative efforts are in danger due to the lack of an educated and trained workforce, and named the Workforce Investment Act as the means to solving the problem of an underprepared workforce. From here Jeffords drew a distinct connection between welfare status and skills deficiencies. Underlying Jeffords’ claims (as well as the claims of the other
participating senators) is an assumption about the cause of and solution to the problem of welfare spending. To put the assumption simply, welfare recipients are unemployed because they lack skills and they lack skills because they lack educational and training opportunities; therefore, by providing educational opportunities, the government can ensure that welfare recipients will acquire the necessary skills to obtain long-term employment.

Having gained popularity in the early 1990s, the welfare to work theme served as a effective rhetorical bridge between welfare reform and workforce education. The welfare reform to which Jeffords pointed (and which several senators hailed as the most prominent legislation of the previous Congress) is the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which had passed Congress with a comfortable majority and a fair amount of bipartisan support in both houses.\(^\text{12}\) Sandlin (2004) asserted that the very name of this legislation reflects how “rhetoric and policy have increasingly focused on the responsibility of welfare recipients to create their own ways out of poverty” (p. 90; see also Sandlin & Clark, 2009). Kilgore and Bloom (2003) argued that the PRWORA “limit[ed] the meaning of self-sufficiency to the economic condition of not taking financial support from the state for the care of one’s family” (pp. 365-366).

Welfare to work helped lay the groundwork for the human capital discourse circulating in WIA debate, focusing attention on individual skills deficiency as cause for unemployment and reinforcing the belief that education will improve employment status. Drawing on such discourse, Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), for example, implied that earning one’s “own money” and taking care of oneself are necessary preconditions to earning self-respect:

\(^\text{12}\) The final house vote resulted in 328 Ayes, 101 Nays, 5 Present/Not Voting; of the Ayes, 230 were Republicans and 98 were Democrats. The final vote in the Senate resulted in 78 Ayes, 21 Nays, 1 Present/Not Voting; of the Ayes, 52 were Republicans, 25 were Democrats, and 1 was Independent.
…we are giving our citizens an opportunity for a new beginning. It gives them a new beginning to become more productive members of our workforce. It gives them a new beginning to get off the welfare rolls and earn the self-respect they deserve by earning their own money and taking care of themselves. (Mikulski, S4262, 5/5/1998)

The repetition of, and thus emphasis on, “new beginning” echoes the quote adorning President Clinton’s desk as he signed the PRWORA into law: “A New Beginning, Welfare to Work” (Social Security Administration, 1996, http://www.socialsecurity.gov/history/welref.html).

Welfare recipients, for Mikulski, are certainly deserving of self-respect, yet their position in the welfare system precludes their ability to obtain it. Welfare recipients must—and will, Mikulski argued, through the WIA—undergo a complete life change though which employment guarantees their sense of self-worth.

Welfare reform helped introduce the rationale for this and perhaps framed the WIA as part of a much larger national legislative effort to address international economic competition by investing in human capital. While the welfare to work theme is significant, I want to emphasize that it is significant for making a connection between lack of skills and unemployment and, by extension, between acquisition of skills and employment. Jeffords’ speeches during the WIA Senate debates suggest that employment should be the primary goal of education. Early in his first speech, Jeffords declared

we will never successfully reduce the welfare rolls unless we give people the tools to enter the workforce. Vocational education, adult education, and job training are how we give people those tools. This bill creates a system where all three of these key areas work together. (5/1/1998, p. S4003)
Having set up the causal link between welfare status and skills deficiencies, Jeffords could introduce the need to consolidate educational and workforce training programs.

The above quote also demonstrates some of the discursive means by which Congressional speeches reinforce unequal power relations between those public and private bodies controlling educational and employment opportunities and those unemployed individuals deemed to be lacking skills. The statement “We will never…” marks a shift to the first-person plural personal pronoun, which Jeffords uses throughout his speech to refer to Congress. In doing so, he creates a divide between members of Congress and “people,” which we might interpret as those individuals who will benefit from the proposed legislation. By placing “we” in the subject position, Jeffords highlights the unequal power relationship between the two groups. For example, in the above quote, “we give people tools” suggests that Congress is the responsible agent in this narrative. Congress is responsible for reducing welfare rolls, for giving people tools to enter the workforce, and for funding educational programs. At other points in Jeffords’ speech, “policy,” “States,” or other organized bodies like the “business community” serve as actors; however, at no point in Jeffords’ first speech of the day do “people” or “individuals” occupy the subject position. Instead, the “people” in Jeffords’ narrative are passive objects. This discursive practice suggests that adult learners, especially those receiving welfare, are not independent, personally responsible actors working to improve their economic situations. At the same time, Jeffords’ speech does not attribute to the government sole responsibility for removing individuals’ economic hardships. Rather, he reflects the move away from a liberal welfare state model and toward a market model (Guy, 2005; Quigley, 2000) by encouraging Congress to “give people the tools to enter the workforce”—in essence, helping people to help themselves.
Jeffords continued his speech on the second day of debate by providing additional details about the inadequacy of the current workforce, the consequences of this problem, and the legislative measures required to address it. He referred to the 1983 report “A Nation at Risk” which he said emphasized the need for the United States to develop an “adequately trained workforce to meet the global challenges of the 21st century.” Jeffords suggested that little progress has been made on this front:

Fifteen years later, here is what we have. According to the latest census information, 22 percent of the population in the United States aged 25 and over have completed less than 12 years of schooling. [...] A most recent national adult literacy survey indicated that 44 million adults have literacy difficulty. This means that over 20 percent of adults in this country have trouble using reading, writing and computation skills to say nothing of qualifying for jobs that are available, for which we should have the workforce. (S4253)

In emphasizing how long we have been seeing warnings about the issue of workforce development and how little has been done, Jeffords also indicates that addressing this issue has been a long time coming, thereby adding a sense of immediacy to this legislation. At the same time, he reemphasizes the assumption that the issue at hand is not job creation but workforce education, much of which involves basic literacy education. Literacy is actually, according to Jeffords, one of the major problems:

…the problems we have with the adult workforce is[sic] literacy, to a large extent. As the demands become higher and greater on our workforce, we are recognizing that we need more people to move into the workforce to take the jobs that are available. Thus, it is incredibly important that we coordinate adult education along with vocational education.

When Jeffords pointed out the “190,000 unfilled positions in the technology field,” he claimed “the reason for difficulty in filling these positions is...because of the lack of skilled workers” (5/5/1998, p. S4253). Whether Jeffords or his speechwriters or other members of Congress or lobbyists or any other interested parties actually believe this to be the case is uncertain. What is clear, however, is that these Congressional speeches, as well as the discourses that inform and are shaped by these speeches, reinforce the assumption that a lack of skills leads to unemployment and welfare, as well as the related assumption that the acquisition of skills leads to productive employment. As I will discuss in the following section, Senator Kennedy took these assumptions further by linking skills development more explicitly to national economic growth.

The 21st Century Economy: Responding to Technological Change

An educated workforce has become the most valuable resource in the modern economy. Our Nation’s long-term economic vitality depends on the creation of an effective, accessible, and accountable system of job training and career development which is open to all of our citizens. Schools must assume more responsibility for preparing their students to meet the challenges of the 21st century workplace. (Sen. Edward Kennedy, 5/1/1998, p. S4004)

Kennedy’s speeches followed a pattern similar to that of Jeffords’ speeches. He introduced the legislation, commending the efforts of his fellow senators; contextualized the bill within prior legislative measures, including Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 and Job Training Partnership Act of 1982; discussed new problems facing the nation and the insufficiency of existing legislation to address those problems; offered current examples of sufficient efforts at the state and local level; and discussed ways that the WIA would build upon
such efforts and meet the country’s needs for a highly skilled workforce. While Kennedy addressed welfare reform to an extent, echoing Jeffords’ claims that job training is a necessary component of successful welfare reform, his narrative was dominated by a different theme. As the above quote indicates, Kennedy developed a narrative in which the Nation’s economic future depends on a workforce that can meet the demands of the “21st century workplace.”

The main actors in Kennedy’s narrative fall into roughly three groups: technological change, the modern economy, and the Workforce Investment Act itself. Granted, at times Kennedy does name other subjects as actors and I will discuss examples of this below. On both days of debate, however, Kennedy focused primarily on non-human actors, suggesting that the changes prompting the need for policy interventions are not the fault of the government, but are out of human control altogether. By giving the legislation itself agency, Kennedy further distances it from any individual or group’s particular political agendas. For example, in the following statement, Kennedy gave agency to “rapidly changing technology and the shift of manufacturing jobs overseas:”

In addition, the combination of rapidly changing technology and the shift of manufacturing jobs overseas is creating an alarming number of dislocated workers.”


In this case, as in many others, Kennedy omits any human cause for the shift of jobs and precludes consideration of broader policy changes like market regulation and government oversight of corporate business practices. While most conventional narratives feature human actors, Kennedy features broader forces as the main actors, essentially removing responsibility

13 About 64% of Kennedy’s speech featured non-human subjects performing actions. Out of roughly 140 sentences, 13 used “we” as the subject, referring to Congress, 7 used “I,” referring to Kennedy, one named another senator, one used “He,” referring to the President, and one used “Wellstone and I.” Only 25 contained other human actors in the subject position.
from those groups who actually influence such forces. In other words, he directs his audience away from considering the impact of government officials, corporate executives, and lobbyists on changing technology and a shifting job market.

When Kennedy does link the legislation to human actors it is by highlighting bipartisan agreement, addressing common needs, or serving disadvantaged people. In the sentences directly following that quoted above, Kennedy brings attention back to dislocated workers’ lack of skills and Congress’ role in solving this problem:

These individuals have extensive work experience but their skills are no longer in demand. We must give them the opportunity for retraining and for the development of new skills in the 21st century workplace. (5/1/1998, p. S4004)

When Kennedy does refer to human actors, he affords or constrains their level of agency by framing their relationships to larger political, economic, and social forces in particular ways. For example, in several cases throughout his speech, Kennedy uses the first person plural to signal Congress and other groups invested in the legislation as actors. As I noted above, this “we” excludes the adult learners meant to benefit from this legislation and bestows power to government (federal, state, and local) and to businesses, in other words those who vote on or lobby for legislation. The contrast of third person and first person plural in the above two sentences makes the distance between the two groups all the more stark.

Adult learners’ positioning in the Senate debates is shaped not only by grammatical representations of power structures, but also by statements that more explicitly objectify them. For example, on both days of debate, Kennedy makes the following claim: “An educated

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14 Interestingly, Kennedy’s May 5 speech is in large part a nearly direct repetition of his May 1 speech. He introduced no new information and in many cases repeats whole segments of his first speech. While I do not have the space to address it here, such repetition has larger implications
workforce has become the most valuable resource in the modern economy.” Although included in the subject position, the educated workforce does not carry out an action. Instead, Kennedy immediately equates this subject with a resource, making it an object rather than an active group of people. In another instance, Kennedy claimed that the goal of the legislation is “to make sure that America has the best trained workforce we could possibly have as we move into the 21st century.” In this case, the workforce is positioned as an object to be had. Further, the workforce is positioned against America, the possessor or owner, which maintains agency by Kennedy’s use of “we” in the final two clauses. Both of these examples demonstrate that human capital discourse not only objectifies skills but also reduces people themselves to commodities.

At one point Kennedy characterizes an imaginary “individual” as an active agent with some level of power. In this portion of his narrative, he implies that responding to the rapid pace of technological change would not only include developing a more highly skilled workforce, but developing a workforce comprised of individuals responsible for their own training. Yet, Kennedy frames individual responsibility as a matter of independence, a value that has widespread, bipartisan support. In the middle of his speech on May 1, he provided a hypothetical story about an individual participating in a program that the Workforce Investment Act would help create:

An individual comes into the One Stop Career Centers and takes the various kinds of tests. […] The individual will be able to make a judgment themselves about which training program is best suited for them. (5/1/1998, p. S4005)

for the study of Congressional speeches, reflecting efforts to emphasize particular claims or information; the constraints under which members of Congress and their staff work; and the discourse conventions of Congress itself, which may rely on repetition in order to maintain consistent messages.
On one hand, this scenario suggests that individuals become empowered through this legislation; as Kennedy stated earlier, “individual choice” is a key aspect of the WIA. On the other hand, individuals’ supposed empowerment is tempered by the prescriptive nature of a scenario in which they receive information on and assistance with employment-centered training, training that will build skills considered necessary for certain kinds of employment,\(^{15}\) which may or may not include career paths individuals actually want to pursue. They receive no options for educational opportunities that do not appear to directly relate to or result in employment opportunities offered by businesses cooperating with the one stop centers. Such a scenario, then, is reminiscent of the “new work order” discussed by Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1996), who noted that “the worker’s ‘freedom’ is fixed within the margins of the goals, ends, and vision set by the new capitalism and its theoreticians” (p. xvi). They further argued that

real commitment and belief, as well as real learning, require that learners be able to engage in genuine dialogue and contestation with viewpoints, but such genuine contestation is ultimately problematic in a business setting where, in the end, profit is the goal and the competition is at one’s heels” (p. xvi).

Taking this perspective into account, the educational system promoted by the WIA allows adults freedom to pursue options for employment that meet the economic demands of a given context. This does not promise the scenario Kennedy describes, in which an individual has the power to independently make judgments about his or her future, since such power is antithetical to economic demands.

\(^{15}\) Some of those kinds of employment named in the WIA debates include those in the “technology field” and “health fields.”
Washington Does Not Know Best: Promoting Decentralization

These programs should be tailored to individual needs, not to Washington bureaucrats and what Washington bureaucrats think is best. …we can no longer afford the Washington-knows-best attitude that created the current maze of training and related programs. (Sen. Mike DeWine, 5/5/1998, p. S4256)

Speaking after Jeffords and Kennedy on both days of WIA debate, Mike DeWine’s Senate speeches extended the issue of independence by framing it as a matter of decentralization, which would give more control to states and localities. DeWine used many of the same rhetorical strategies employed by Jeffords and Kennedy, including situating the WIA within the narrative of welfare reform. For example he claimed that, in passing welfare reform legislation, Congress was “empowering the States, empowering the local communities, and private businesses to seek a better way—to replace welfare with opportunity.” He called the reform of the job training system the unfinished business of the last Congress and the unfinished business of welfare reform. Twice he used the phrase “work not welfare” in describing the goals of the WIA. DeWine even echoed Jeffords’ earlier use of the term “tools.” However, instead of focusing on giving individual job seekers the tools to gain employment, DeWine focused on providing “States and localities” with the “tools to empower them to develop comprehensive work force investment systems that address the needs of job seekers and employers alike” (p. S4256).

DeWine’s opening speech on May 1, 1998 is particularly distinctive in its use of a narrative about the risks of big government. Much of his speech focused on the excessive bureaucracy and “red tape” interfering with the success of workforce education programs. Specifically, DeWine’s narrative characterizes the Workforce Investment Act as the remedy to a “fragmented and duplicative maze of narrowly focused job training and job-related programs,”
which has been causing a host of problems for “States,” “local communities,” “private businesses,” and “individuals seeking assistance.” He introduced these problems early in his speech, claiming “tragically, the current job training programs have been unable to provide quality service on a consistent enough basis” (5/1/1998, p. S4011). Because of this, according to DeWine, employers cannot find enough skilled workers to fill job openings; the nation is threatened by a labor shortage; “states, localities, and community activists are frustrated” by the duplicative programs; and “individuals are frustrated because the system is so confusing they often don’t know where to begin” (p. S4011). DeWine then introduced S. 1186, the Workforce Investment Act, as the solution to these problems. He even claims that this bill is “the only way” states and localities “will be able to provide comprehensive services to those individuals who are seeking training and education assistance” (p. S4011).

DeWine repeated many of the same beneficial features of the WIA in his May 5 speech, but framed them within the theme of bipartisanship. He used bipartisanship to reinforce the validity of decentralization in the WIA, implying that everyone agrees consolidating several federal programs into a single bill will improve education and training opportunities. DeWine claimed that the WIA received so much bipartisan support because it is an extension of the welfare reform of the 105th Congress and would continue “the devolution of Federal power to where it rightfully belongs—States, localities—and most importantly, the individuals who are voluntarily seeking training assistance” (5/5/1998, p. S4256). It also had support, according to DeWine, because it eliminated government bureaucracy and promoted personal responsibility. After thanking all of the senators who have worked on the bill, DeWine launched into a narrative about the “much-needed and overdue reform to our job training system.” As DeWine tells it, local communities have not had enough autonomy because the notions that “Washington knows
best” and “one size fits all” have for too long shaped policy; this has led to programs that do not adequately serve local needs and alienate state and local governments as well as members of the business community. Based on DeWine’s understanding of the past, the federal government’s failure lies in extending its power too far. Much like Kennedy, DeWine shifts attention away from the relationship between unemployment and complex changes in the job market and also away from the federal government’s role in this relationship. While Kennedy featured non-human forces as the main actors in his speech, DeWine featured a government that has interfered too heavily in the development and functioning of workforce training and adult education programs.

While DeWine promotes greater independence for states, local governments, and businesses, he also promotes greater accountability:

Under this bill, training services will be held accountable to high standards. This means they will have to prove training leads ultimately to meaningful, unsubsidized employment, showing how many people were placed, at what cost, and how many people remained employed 6 months, a year or 18 months later. That is true accountability. That is the true measure of whether job training works or does not work. (5/5/1998, p. S4256)

DeWine’s emphasis on “increasing accountability while decreasing red tape” highlights the contradictory goals evident in Congressional discourse about the WIA. The law is meant to allow more freedom by decreasing some requirements, while at the same time holding programs accountable by increasing other requirements. While the WIA for example, removes income eligibility requirements, allowing states to serve “all adults who voluntarily seek assistance” (p. S4256), it also institutes the requirement that states submit a unified state plan, which would hold all programs in the state accountable to a common set of standards.
Conclusion: Beyond the Limitations of Workforce Investment

Jeffords’ speeches convey a story in which the nation’s future success depends upon reducing (even eliminating) the welfare rolls by creating an educated workforce that can fill the large numbers of jobs available. Kennedy’s speeches describe a future in which, thanks to the Workforce Investment Act, individuals would seemingly experience greater independence by way of greater control over their education and employment opportunities. The entire nation, in turn, would experience greater economic success and occupy a more competitive position in the global economic system. DeWine’s speeches about the Workforce Investment Act promote accountability while promoting state and local autonomy, responding to demands for both limiting federal bureaucracy and ensuring returns on federal investments. Together, the Senators’ use of these narratives reinforce the unqualified claim that more education begets more economic success, as well as the assumption that accountability requirements will produce more successful educational programs.

Despite the emphasis on creating a more highly skilled workforce in Congressional speeches about the WIA, the law itself indicates that there are in fact limits to the level and kind of education individuals can pursue with federal support. In other words, the work-first nature of the WIA precludes such options as college education, cultural enrichment courses, or civic development courses. Moreover, if we are to believe human capital theory as it is represented in policy discussions—for example, in the claim that more education ensures better employment and higher wages—then we would assume that continuing education and the attainment of higher education degrees would be the goal. Yet, while some areas of the WIA address
postsecondary education,\(^{16}\) these sections primarily emphasize its role in preparing people for employment. In his testimony before the House Subcommittee on Education and the Workforce in 2011, Harry J. Holzer claimed the labor market demands “the ‘middle skill’ categories in many sectors that include a wide range of education and training credentials beyond high school” not necessarily those that require degrees from four-year institutions (2011, p. 8; see also Holzer & Lerman, 2007). Policy discourse surrounding the WIA reflects the trend toward developing a certain kind of workforce, one of limited education that can satisfy certain employment needs. Jeffords’ comment during the 1998 debates that many of the available jobs would not “require 4 plus years of postsecondary education” is worth emphasizing. This legislation, it seems, is meant to supply business with certain kinds of skilled workers. Brandt’s (2005) argument about literacy’s changing value adds another facet to this issue:

…the more people have of a certain kind of literacy or literacy product, the more it starts to function as a public good in the economic sense of the phrase—that is, the less new profit there is to be made from it. (p. 307)

The opportunities to which politicians refer are therefore also limited. I share Mike Rose’s (2004) concern about “the implication—evident in popular discourse about work—that so-called older types of work, like manufacturing or service work, are, by and large, mindless” (p. xix) Like Rose, I believe that such work is anything but mindless and that “the way we talk about it matters.” As he pointed out, “the dimension of it that is least discussed and appreciated—and

\(^{16}\) Title I contains funding provisions for youth activities, including “preparation for postsecondary educational opportunities, in appropriate cases” (Sec.129). Under the Title I “Adult Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities,” part of the requirements for one-stop career centers includes offering information about “providers of postsecondary vocational education activities” (Sec. 134). One of the core indicators of performance that programs are required to report on under Title II includes “Placement in, retention in, or completion of, postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment or career advancement.”
that we can continue to learn from—is the thought it takes to do it well” (p. xix). Yet, when policy discussions are overrun with human capital discourse that emphasizes the acquisition of skills, the ongoing knowledge development of such work is ignored.

Aside from the inconsistencies posed by policymakers’ use of human capital discourse, its dominance in the policy arena precludes any interrogation of the kind of education promoted in and funded by federal legislation. Both the end of economic mobility and the educational means to that end are assumed to be stable and agreed upon. I am concerned about the implications this has for perceptions of the value of postsecondary education. According to this perspective, postsecondary education exists mainly to help people acquire skills suitable for employment, attain a credential, and enter the workforce. By extension, the literacy education in which students engage should focus on developing reading and writing skills that assist them in this process of getting a degree and a job. Higher education broadly and composition programs in particularly have also begun to feel the weight of the accountability movement as the human capital perspective extends into postsecondary learning and the kinds of reading, writing, and communication it is expected to provide students. To have an even greater influence on the perceptions of literacy shaping our composition programs and courses, we need to be involved in shaping notions of literacy in all areas of policy, including the federal adult education context.

St. Clair (2002) noted that “human capital is such a dominant model in educational policy and practice that it takes some effort to come up with an alternative” (p. 85). Part of this effort involves pointing to the unrealized promises of human capital theory as it is applied to education. For example, despite investments in skills-based literacy education, we have not seen the broad economic development and drops in unemployment promised by legislative arguments (Graff & Duffy, 2008). Individuals’ economic mobility is constrained to a great degree by factors like
economic climate, geographical location, and the number of jobs available in a given area; educational credentials alone do not guarantee employment.

The effort to introduce alternative views of literacy education also involves pointing to benefits of adult education that fall beyond the purview of human capital discourse. St. Clair further claimed, “If only human capital elements are considered in program evaluation, sufficient critical elements of the program are missed to render evaluation misleading and to underrepresent the contribution” (p. 92). I would add that the dominance of human capital discourse limits both program evaluation and program design, since many programs must promise to produce outcomes that demonstrate a growth of human capital in order to receive funding. More often than not, these outcomes include number of students served, whether students demonstrate the acquisition of basic skills, and how many students obtain educational credential like the GED. While such assessment practices communicate the extent to which a given adult education program is meeting the demands of the legislation, they overlook the benefits adults receive by participating in that program, participation that involves an array of culturally and historically situated literate activities. Drawing on Graff and Duffy’s (2008) claim that a “functioning democracy” relies not just on literacy skills development, but also on “participation, debate, and a diversity of viewpoints” (p. 49), I maintain that all education should offer participants a space to critically reflect on themselves and their worlds. This requires a much broader vision of federal education policy than human capital theory allows.
Conclusion

(Re)Situating Literacy in Public Policy

If America fails to educate new workers from these adult ranks, large numbers of them will become a drain on the economy rather than a positive economic force.

*Gail Spanenberg, National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2011*

I began this project by claiming that federal education policy in the United States employs a human capital perspective that conflicts with writing studies’ interests in the value of literacy education. The history I have provided demonstrates the confluence of events, discourses, beliefs, and broad cultural narratives within the policymaking context, reinforcing the view of literacy as a resource possessed by individuals who themselves become more or less valuable resources for national economic productivity according to the kind and amount of literacy they have accumulated. These arguments are still prevalent, even among members of the adult education field. The above statement by Gail Spanenberg was included in a letter to members of Congress, written on behalf of the National Commission on Adult Literacy and heavily referencing the 2008 report *Reach Higher America*. While it may be the case that adult education lobbyists are attempting to work within existing policy discourse to ensure continued funding for their programs, their characterizations of adult literacy education allow little room for alternatives and maintain primarily economic justifications and economic objectives for such learning. This is but one example of how entrenched human capital theory is in arguments about literacy education funding.

While all federal adult education policy dating back to the 1960s contained an economic rationale, the representation of this rationale in legislation and policy discourse transformed over
the course of the twentieth century. Early legislation enacted within Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs maintained the welfare state policies developed by Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and centered on helping individual citizens, particularly those most in need, to gain economic mobility. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, policymakers focused more on creating legislation that would benefit national economic growth by investing in educational programs that would produce a skilled workforce. This trend included greater consolidation of federal programs and funding streams, which for adult education meant that programs serving anyone from welfare recipients to dislocated workers to individuals pursuing secondary school completion would all be housed under the same law and competition for funding would increase as a result. From a policy perspective—a perspective most concerned with economic rationales for educational investments—consolidation of services would be a more cost-effective way to invest in the literacy education of those who can quickly obtain jobs, filling the needs of a given industry and those businesses directly involved in the local training programs.

Throughout this history, policymakers’ reliance on human capital theory has reinforced definitions of literacy as limited to basic skills, including reading, writing, and computation. By extension, literacy learners have been figured as atomized individuals, only connected to specific contexts in ways that match up with policy demands—for example, individuals acquire basic skills in order to gain employment, retain employment, or pursue additional job training. While policy has also included the goals of meeting “adult responsibilities” or participating “more fully in society,” such goals reflect what Brandt (2005) described as “a passing nod to the value of literacy for aesthetic pleasure or political participation” (p. 306). Human capital theory became so embedded in legislative rationales for investment in adult literacy education that, regardless of
the addition of purposes beyond employment and economic advancement, legislation consistently prioritized the latter.

The assumption that literacy education primarily (or even solely) serves economic interests extends beyond federally funded adult education and influences the contexts for a great deal of writing studies’ work, from writing instruction to writing center practice to writing across the curriculum initiatives in higher education. One goal of my project is to provide a historical basis for writing studies scholars to further engage with policy development at all levels of literacy education. This engagement can help us to rethink claims about literacy both within and beyond the university setting, and it is particularly relevant at a time when forces external to the field of writing studies—and, indeed, the university—may impose functional definitions of literacy that run contrary to the best interests of all adults, whether or not they pursue postsecondary education. Moreover, we are seeing an increase in calls for the development of standards and assessments based on such functional definitions. With such a shift away from the purposes and practices of literacy, we in writing studies have a vested interest in joining policy discussions and focusing debates on how and why literacy matters.

The Results of Workforce Training

The increasing emphasis on workforce training and accountability requirements in adult literacy education has had little impact on increases in employment. As I noted in chapter 1, Baptiste and Nayanungo (2007) examined performance data from all WIA-funded programs in 2003 and found that less than two-thirds of program participants gained employment. Further, the jobs acquired did not provide income sufficient to “pull a family of four half way out of poverty” (p. 21). As I will discuss below, recent work by adult education scholars suggests that connecting literacy education to societal outcomes other than employment, including for
example civic engagement and health (OECD, 2007), could more effectively produce the economic benefits current education policy attempts to achieve. In other words, citizens’ literate activity in a variety of social contexts contributes to the development of civil society, which in turn provides the kind of stability that economic markets need to flourish.

In addition to the lack of impact on individuals’ economic mobility, the trend toward workforce training and strict accountability requirements for funding has obscured goals that extend beyond economics. Belzer and St. Clair (2003) found no evidence that placing adult education funding within workforce development laws and mandating that programs comply with the NRS by reporting outcomes data to the federal government produces more effective instructional practices or enhanced learner outcomes. Instead, these changes have limited educational practice, replacing a “spirit of social justice and hope for structural change” with “a sense of hunkering down to comply with accountability demands” (p. 3). This focus on compliance means that programs give little attention to learners’ goals, beyond those that connect to economic advancement. Offering an apt example, Belzer and St. Clair noted that “it is difficult to show that helping learners write a letter to their Congressional representatives on the need for child care is directly related to increasing that individual’s employability” (p. 4).

Pointing out the limitations of literacy education policy is but one part of a project that must also work toward introducing broader notions of literate activity. However, because economic goals are so prominent in policy we might consider framing alternatives to existing policy and the kinds of assessment practices, standards, and outcomes reporting it enforces in economic terms. For example, in their discussion of the need for adult literacy education to integrate social capital goals, Balatti and Falk (2002) demonstrated that human capital benefits are enhanced by development of social capital, that social capital maximizes “the impact of adult
learning on socioeconomic well-being” and that “only through social capital are the skills and knowledge of human capital made available for the benefit of individuals” and the larger society (p. 282). Economic benefits, in other words, often accrue because of the simultaneous accumulation of social capital—relationships that offer individuals greater power to pursue, for example, higher-paying jobs.

Social capital theory has offered adult literacy education researchers (Balatti & Falk, 2002; Balatti, Black & Falk, 2006; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; St. Clair, 2008) a way to introduce more complex notions of literacy as context-dependent activity into large-scale, government-funded programs. As Balatti, Black, and Falk (2008) describe it, social capital encompasses “relationships that facilitate access to other resources for individuals or groups, and which can lead to an improvement in their socioeconomic wellbeing, as well as that of their community” (p. 1). Balatti and Falk’s (2002) research on Australia’s Adult and Community Education sector studied social capital in terms of the effect participants’ learning had on their communities. They found that building social capital not only improved individuals’ learning but also led to changes that either directly or indirectly benefitted their communities, including acquiring educational credentials, obtaining employment, “exercising citizen and consumer rights,” recycling, and “participating in environmental projects, among many others (p. 290).

It is worth noting, though, that Balatti and Falk’s study was commissioned by the government of the State of Victoria in Australia, and much of the research on which they draw was also supported by the Australian government. This suggests that the social capital model might be gaining ground in that context primarily because the government supports—in principle and in funding—educational programs that extend beyond the development of human capital. St. Clair’s (2008) work with the First Lady’s Family Literacy Initiative in Texas offers one example
of social capital assessment in the United States context, and while he found positive results, he also noted the difficulty of applying social capital models on a widespread basis. He pointed out that social capital is more difficult to measure than human capital and that there does not yet exist a sufficient evaluation method for determining social capital outcomes. In addition, the effects of social capital vary depending on the individual and his or her context, whereas the effects of human capital development are considered to have similar impacts across individuals and contexts.

Writing Studies and Federal Policy

In order to increase our level of engagement in the formation of educational policy, writing studies scholars could expand the field’s involvement in the lobbying process, urging members of Congress to introduce, pass, or amend legislation that would better serve the literacy needs of learners at all levels of education. NCTE has been active in lobbying at the federal level through the James R. Squire Office of Policy Research, led by Anne Ruggles Gere. This office produces research summaries and policy briefs about evidence-based best practices, which are communicated to Congressional leaders and executive departments. Much of this work, however, centers on adolescent literacy and issues relevant to writing instruction in secondary education. Since 2002, the College Board’s National Commission on Writing has been publishing studies meant to draw national attention and federal funding to writing instruction. The Commission’s reports to Congress extend across secondary and postsecondary contexts for literacy education, and they incorporate communicative practices characteristic of the policymaking process, including surveys, practice reports, and narrative testimony from students and teachers. However, the number of studies is limited and, while efforts focus on increasing the scope of writing instruction in schools and colleges, the rationale remains closely tied to the interests of
business and policymaking contexts. The Commission even notes that it was created to address “concern within the education, business, and policy-making communities that the quality of writing in the United States was not what it should be” (2006, p. 3).

While the work of the NCTE and the National Commission on Writing remains integral to advancing the work of our field in the policy context, we certainly need to do more. For example, we might introduce policymakers to more research that demonstrates the inadequacy of economic rationales for literacy education and the detrimental consequences that such rationales can produce regarding evaluation and accountability. Such research would point out that job acquisition and retention would be supported by programs that pay greater attention to literate activity and the particular contexts for such activity and by instructional practices in the progressive tradition (Au, 2011). In order to do this, however, we need different kinds of research to support our arguments and to make them convincing to legislators and executives.

While recognizing the positive impact of new literacy studies on adult education, Belzer and St. Clair suggested that “unfortunately, this perspective tends to add complexity rather than provide a unidimensional set of measurable skills as demanded by the current policy and accountability context” (p. 29). Therefore, “it is not a powerful tool for arguing that literacy should be—and indeed must be—more than phonics and standardized tests” (p. 29). On a similar note, Kazemek (1988) argued that literacy research demonstrating literacy as context-dependent and “disclos[ing] the bias of arguments that blame the victim but ignore the social and economic systems that victimize” fails to impact policy “because we do not know how to tell our stories persuasively” (p. 470). One consequence of our failure to influence policy is the increasing value placed on standardized testing, which Gallagher (2011) claimed “continues to make inroads in higher education” to the extent that “upper administrators, policymakers, and the general public
continue to imagine faculty and students as targets of assessment rather than generators of it” (p. 451). In order combat such notions of educators and learners, writing studies scholars should expand their communication with policymakers and, in order to ensure this communication brings about desired changes (in law, perception, and discourse), we should carefully consider the language of policy discourse and the conventions of argument expected and accepted in such a context.

While we can certainly be prepared with extended studies to support our claims, we need to consider what kinds of research would best communicate our claims to an audience of legislators and other government officials and, thus, make our ideas workable for policy. Kathryn Au (2011) recently noted her concern about “the strong association between quantitative methods and basic skills approaches, and qualitative methods and progressive approaches” (p. 169). This association has led, in part, to a lack of studies “involving more than a single classroom or handful of classrooms, showing that approaches in the progressive tradition had improved the literacy learning of students of diverse backgrounds” (p. 167). Like Au, I acknowledge that policy makers’ decisions are more often shaped by political interests than by research; however, I also agree that “there may be moments when well-designed, large-scale research showing the benefits of approaches in the progressive tradition could make a difference” (p. 169).

The National Writing Project offers one example of the sort of large-scale study that Au calls for. In 2010, the organization published the results of 16 studies that compared student achievement in NWP classes with those in control classes; out of 112 comparisons, the report showed that 103 demonstrated favorable results in both basic skills and development of ideas, organization, and stance. Such studies are becoming more necessary since recent federal budget
cuts replaced the NWP’s federal set-asides and matching funds with a competitive grant program that requires organizations to demonstrate effectiveness. Continued funding has not yet been guaranteed, with the House and Senate still working out differences between versions of an amended Elementary and Secondary Education Act. While the Senate version would increase the set-aside for competitive funding to 5%, the House version would eliminate even the current 1%. With such a precarious funding future, the NWP must work harder to demonstrate the results of its work for teachers and students.

There currently seems to be at least some effort to promote civic development, and a recent report from the AACU (2012), “A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy’s Future,” suggests that education focused on democratic civic participation is more likely to help people develop skills desired by employers. Significantly, “A Crucible Moment” was commissioned by the Department of Education, yet resists the human capital discourse dominating federal education policies. The report argues against assumptions that higher education has an economic agenda reducible to workforce training and calls on public leaders and educators to recognize the civic dimension of all disciplines. For example, economic stability or economic growth depend on individuals' making decisions that affect their local communities and national society; people make better economic decisions when they have deeper and broader knowledge of their own and others' positioning within the political, social, and economic systems. Literate activity is key in developing such knowledge. As literacy educators and researchers participate in efforts to promote situated, context-based policy approaches to literacy education—and we should—we can emphasize what we know about written communication, rhetorical awareness, and literate activity in these various contexts.
References


Kennedy, J.F. (6 February 1962). Special message to Congress on education. Available at http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8858#axzz1mUBgPQXB


<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/mono-mdtadtext.htm>


## Appendix A
### Legislative Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year Enacted</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Defense Education Act</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>&quot;to strengthen the national defense and to encourage and assist in the expansion and improvement of educational programs to meet critical national needs and for other purposes&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manpower Development and Training Act</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>&quot;...to require the Federal Government to appraise the manpower requirements and resources of the Nation, and to develop and apply the information and methods needed to deal with the problems of unemployment resulting from automation and technological changes and other types of persistent unemployment&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational Education Act</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>“An Act to strengthen and improve the quality of vocational education and to expand the vocational education opportunities in the Nation, to extend for three years the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and Public Laws 815 and 874, Eighty-first Congress (federally affected areas) and for other purposes”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Adult Basic Education Programs, ” Economic Opportunity Act, Title II, Part B</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>“It is the purpose of this legislation to initiate programs of instruction for persons 18 years old and older whose inability to read or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to obtain or retain employment”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult Education Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title III</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>“It is the purpose of this legislation to encourage and expand basic educational programs for adults to enable them to overcome English language limitations, to improve their basic education in preparation for occupational training and more profitable employment, and to become more productive and responsible citizens”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilingual Education Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments, Title VII</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>&quot;In recognition of the special educational needs of the large numbers of children of limited English-speaking ability in the United States, congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance to local education agencies to develop and carry out new and imaginative elementary and secondary school programs designed to meet these special educational needs&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Literacy Act</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>“To enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults, to ensure that all adults in the United States acquire the basic skills necessary to function effectively and achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives, and to strengthen and coordinate adult literacy programs.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Workforce Investment Act, Title II</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>“It is the purpose of this title to create a partnership among the Federal Government, States, and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult education and literacy services, in order to (1) assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; (2) assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and (3) assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education.”</td>
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## Appendix B
*Journal of Educational Sociology* Special Issues on Adult Education

### 1932

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial (461-462)</td>
<td>Harvey W. Zorbaugh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Principles Underlying Adult Education (463-470)</td>
<td>Francis J. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Aims for Our New Adult Education (471-478)</td>
<td>A. Caswell Ellis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brooklyn Adult Education Study (479-483)</td>
<td>Frank Lorimer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Service Education for Business and the Professions (484-492)</td>
<td>N.C. Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Rural Aspects of Adult Education (493-499)</td>
<td>Kenyon L. Butterfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociological Aspects of Parent Education (500-507)</td>
<td>Eduard C. Lindeman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need of Education for Labor (508-512)</td>
<td>Spencer Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Projects and Methods in Educational Sociology (513-522)</td>
<td>Morse A. Cartwright</td>
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### 1937

<table>
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<th>Article Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Editorial (514)</td>
<td>Francis J. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle Sam Promotes Education (527-534)</td>
<td>Chester S. Williams</td>
</tr>
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## 1937 Continued

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<th>Article Title</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Organization for Adult Education (535-547)</td>
<td>A.F. Wileden</td>
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<tr>
<td>A WPA Program of Adult Education, Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania (548-559)</td>
<td>Carl A. Marsden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education in Greater Boston (560-565)</td>
<td>M.J. Ahern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye’s Adult Education Experiment (566-571)</td>
<td>Dana F. Woodman</td>
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## 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Editorial (1-2)</td>
<td>Dan Dodson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreword (3)</td>
<td>Winifred Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sociology of Adult Education (4-13)</td>
<td>Eduard C. Lindeman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education that Changes Communities (14-19)</td>
<td>Jean Ogden and Jess Ogden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education and the Public Schools (20-26)</td>
<td>Caroline A. Whipple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State Program Takes Social Form (27-30)</td>
<td>David L. MacKaye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalities for Social Progress (31-35)</td>
<td>Lawrence K. Frank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving Individual Problems of Adjustment (36-39)</td>
<td>Sarah E. Marshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations – A New Venture in Education (40-42)</td>
<td>Irving M. Ives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article Title</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workers Get Ready (43-45)</td>
<td>Lawrence Rogin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans and Civilians – Common Goals (46-48)</td>
<td>Louis L. Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from a Soldier (49-51)</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning by Doing (52-54)</td>
<td>Ben Calfo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on Political Education (55-58)</td>
<td>Violet Edwards, Eunice C. Whitney, and Ernest Angell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Developments in Education (59-62)</td>
<td>E. George Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review: <em>What the Negro Wants</em></td>
<td>Rayford W. Logan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review: <em>Color and Democracy, Colonies and Peace</em></td>
<td>W.E. Burghardt</td>
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