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Individualism, Academic Writing, and ESL Writers

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Recent research has pointed to the cultural values implicit in L1-oriented composition pedagogy—a form of pedagogy which is increasingly being encountered by university ESL writers. In this article we examine four principles and practices of L1-oriented composition which appear to tacitly incorporate a U.S. mainstream ideology of individualism: voice, peer review, critical thinking, and textual ownership. We discuss ways in which these principles and practices may not comport well with the cultural approaches taken by many ESL students, depending substantially on past studies to support our discussion. In concluding, we argue that the ideology of individualism described in this article also underlies recent critiques of cross-cultural writing research, and we end by restating the primary rationale of cross-cultural writing research—that sociocultural knowledge regarding our students contributes vitally to knowing who they really are.

The eminent language socialization researcher Shirley Brice Heath has described marked differences in the ways individuals are conceptualized and socialized across cultural groups in the U.S.:

> [Mainstream, middle-class Americans] view infants as individuals and orient them to see themselves as individuals who have the right and obligation to voice their judgments against those of others, so long as they respect rules and roles in doing so....[But] many sociocultural groups traditionally orient their young to group membership and adherence to age and gender roles rather than to individual status. Community-valued institutions, such as the church, may underscore age and gender roles as well as particular or literal readings of written materials. Any interpretation that sets up the views of the individual against those of the group or of those in authority may be widely discouraged or even punished....Hence it is clear that students from many minority communities will be at a disadvantage in classrooms and on certain types of tasks that expect their thinking, as demonstrated through oral and written language, to bear certain characteristics. As the research on cooperative learning has clearly demonstrated, some cultural groups place much higher value on learning in groups and the downplaying of individual displays of knowledge than in other groups (Kagan, 1986; Slavin, 1983). (Heath, 1991, pp.12-14)

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In contrast to the "mainstream U.S." view of the individual described by Heath, a British-Chinese research team derived the following generalizations from their recent, in-depth study of language education in the People's Republic of China (PRC):

> Seeing such classes, with communicative approaches in mind and an uncomfortable feeling that memorising is rote learning, Western teachers might deplore the lack of interaction and individualisation, the absence of creativity and self-expression, or dearth of personal interpretation and experiential learning. Chinese counterparts would draw attention to the large class size, the importance of discipline, the significance of giving children necessary knowledge, the pressures of the curriculum and exam system. They might remark on the role of students' individual learning and preparation at home, on how teachers stress meaning and understanding before recitation and learning, on how students who attend with concentration do indeed interact with teacher and text, in their minds. They could point out that every Chinese child is an individual with different abilities and needs, but that in Chinese society—and in the classroom—the priorities are that each person must be part of a group or community; learning interdependency, co-operation and social awareness; becoming oneself in relation to significant others; expressing that which is socially shared rather than individually felt; creating on the basis of mastery rather than discovery. (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, pp. 177-178)

Over the past 20 years, varying cultural "ideologies of the individual" have been convincingly established by researchers from a wide variety of fields, including anthropology, education, linguistics, psychology, and sociology.[1] In this study, we explore some of the implications of such variation for the teaching of university writing to non-native writers of English.

There has been a notable increase of non-native writers in traditionally L1 U.S. university writing classes in recent years, with mixed results (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Braine, 1996; Santos, 1992). Recent research also suggests that various pedagogical concepts and practices emanating from the teaching of L1 writing assume culturally specific norms of thought and expression which non-mainstream writers of English may have little social training in and thus real difficulty accessing. These principles and practices (and some of their critics) include: process writing (e.g., Kalantzis & Cope, 1993; Delpit, 1988; Inghilleri, 1989; Scollon, 1991; Trimbur, 1994); peer review (e.g., Allaei & Connor, 1990; Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Connor, 1996; Linden-Martin, 1997; Zhang, 1995); and "critical thinking" (Atkinson, 1997; Fox, 1994; Gee, 1990; Heath, 1991; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996b)

In this article we focus on four principles and practices of U.S. university writing pedagogy in which the ideology of individualism appears to be strongly, if tacitly, implicated. The main principle we discuss is "voice," but we also deal with the peer review process, critical thinking, and textual ownership. We then briefly address some recent critiques of cross-cultural writing research, arguing

that they themselves are based on the very ideology of individualism problematized in this article, and finally conclude by defending cross-cultural writing research as an important and necessary contribution to the teaching of L2 writing.

VOICE AND INDIVIDUALISM

Before Defining Voice

A metaphorical notion of "voice" or something like it seems to exist in, if not pervade, mainstream U.S. society, although it is not clearly recognized as such. In this sense it appears to operate as part of a *social practice* (e.g., Gee, 1990; Atkinson, 1997)—a widely if tacitly held and approved concept, on the basis of which social members partly view and define themselves and one another, and by which they thereby facilitate the carrying-on of everyday life. The core notion underlying this social practice seems to be that, as individuals, we all have essentially private and isolated inner selves, which we give outward expression to through the use of a metaphorical "voice."

Evidence that such a concept of metaphorical voice exists and is important in U.S. society can be found in its frequent occurrence in the mass media and popular culture. To give but two examples: A recent *New York Times Magazine* article (Smith, 1997, p. 22) reported of the popular singer/songwriter/producer known as Babyface that: "His defining work must be the "Waiting to Exhale" soundtrack; Babyface's singing never appears on it, yet his voice is everywhere apparent"; and a brochure recently received by one of us in the mail began: "Introducing *DoubleTake*—the new "literary-visual" magazine where the world's finest writers, documentary photographers, and new voices gather to reveal to you their most personal, heartfelt work." Such examples can be multiplied endlessly, as the syndicated columnist William Safire showed in a 1992 column. There, Safire satirically examined the metaphorical use of "voice" in U.S. society, finding that it extended even to the personification of inanimate objects, as in the following from a car advertisement: "This confident new Audi has a distinct voice" (Safire, 1992, p. 14).

One interesting aspect of this broad metaphorical notion of voice is that it does not automatically refer to linguistic communication. This is indicated in two of the examples already given—cars obviously can't talk but still manage to express themselves (even "distinct[ly]"!) in the Audi ad, and Babyface's "voice" comes through loud and clear while being nowhere literally represented on the soundtrack. Safire quotes the playwright Sam Shepard to this same effect in comparing "voice" to "style" in their more literary manifestations: "Style is the outer

trappings....But a voice is almost without words....It's something in the spaces, in between" (Safire, 1992, p. 14).

Still, the most common use of this metaphorical notion of voice appears to involve linguistic (or near-linguistic) communication. And when it does, it seems to be slanted toward a particular ideology or worldview of such communication—one in which the individual is foregrounded and valorized. "Voice" in this sense is seen to represent linguistic behavior which is *clear, overt, expressive,* and even *assertive* and *demonstrative.* That such uses of voice are grounded in a particular communicative ideology is suggested by a growing body of work on communicative styles across cultures (see Atkinson, 1997 for a partial review). This research indicates that a broad range of the world's peoples conventionally adopt models and norms of communication that are almost diametrically opposed to the one just described, in that they foreground the *subtle, interpretive, interdependent, non-assertive,* and even *nonverbal* character of communicative interaction.

Ishii and Bruneau (1994), for instance, review research which points to just such a model of communication among many Japanese, one in which silence is in some sense the preferred norm, and where language is judged and valued more for what it *doesn't* directly express—for what it leaves up to the interpretive activity of the interlocutor or audience—than for what it tries to make clear and overt (see also Barnlund, 1975; Carson, 1992; Clancy, 1986; Fischer & Teigo, 1968; Hinds, 1987; Ito, 1980; Loveday, 1982; Nitobe, cited in Barnlund, 1975, p. 133; and Yamada, 1997 for similar findings regarding Japanese communicative style. Basso, 1972; Crago, 1992; and Scollon & Scollon, 1981 provide parallel descriptions of communicative style among North American Indian groups). Likewise, Harklau (1994) found that "perhaps the single most salient aspect" of her observations of Chinese immigrant students in the mainstream U.S. high school classrooms she studied ethnographically was "their reticence and lack of interaction with native speaking peers" (p. 251), a reticence nearly equaled in their lack of verbal engagement with the teachers in these classes. Such behavior was justified by one of the immigrant students, originally from Taiwan, in the following terms (the student begins by stating a Chinese proverb and then explicates it):

> "Being quiet is gold and vigorously debating is silver." Being quiet is considered polite and intelligent because only the insecure ones need to prove themselves smart by talking loud. For that reason the school [in Taiwan] wanted the students to keep quiet in the classroom.[2]

In sociocultural contexts where such views are widely shared—and they have sometimes been said to be held by a "world-majority" (Fox, 1994)—the notion of individualist voice would seem to make little sense. This, then, is a

first way in which we would claim that there is much cultural in the concept of voice.

Defining Voice

L1 and some L2 compositionists have used "voice" in a variety of ways.[3] The most common and longest-standing usage (cf., Bowden, 1995) is as a more active alternative to personal "style" (see Harklau & Schecter, 1996) or "presence," as *that which individuates a writer from all other writers, as evidenced in that writer's texts.* Donald Stewart, one of its original proponents, defined written voice in just this way:

> Your authentic voice is that authorial voice which sets you apart from every living human being despite the common or shared experiences you have with many others. (Stewart, 1972; cited in Bowden, 1995, p. 175)

Bowden (1995) has described the historical genesis of the notion of written voice as part of the larger 1960's and 1970's reaction to social and educational systems that were emphasizing the impersonal over the personal, the technological over the natural—systems that had themselves arisen partly in response to the Soviet launching of the Sputnik in 1957 and the Cold War. Written voice was born, then, out of the counterculture movement of the late 1960's and 1970's, with its goals of liberation from traditional social bonds, enhanced self-exploration, and, among other things, a more humanistic academics.

Bowden attributes three fundamental characteristics to the original "personal" or "authentic" view of written voice. First, it is (almost by definition) *inward-centered*—it is fundamentally about having contact with one's essential "inner self." In this sense, this version of voice is seen as part of a "neo-romantic" movement in education—as manifested within L1 composition by the "expressivist" or "vitalist" school of Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, and others, and described by Berlin (1987, 1988).

Second, it assumes the *primacy of oral over written communication.* That is, like the related metaphorical notion, "tone," voice suggests that writing is in some sense displaced or deficient speech. At the least, it appears to suggest that speech is more natural than writing—that whereas one's unique inner self is often easily expressible orally, the same cannot be said for writing. The great orality-versus-literacy debates of the last 30 years have sometimes been phrased in similar terms: Walter Ong (1982, cited in Bowden, 1995, p.185), for example, has written that "[S]peech is inseparable from our consciousness." Closer to home, Elbow (1981, p. 288) states: "Voice...is what most people have in their speech but lack in their writing—namely, a sound or texture—the sound of 'them.'"

Third and finally, Bowden points out that the notion of personal written voice has a distinctly literary flavor. Thus, the prototypical examples of a clear personal voice given by Elbow (e.g., 1981, ch. 25) and others are often taken from literary works, and both the concept itself and the pedagogies that foster it tend to advantage students who are strong in the personal, creative-writing mode. Trimbur (1994, p. 110; see also Li, 1996) has made substantially this same point:

> the canniest among [the students in the expressivist process-oriented classroom] recognized that sincerity and authenticity of voice were the privileged terms of symbolic exchange.... If process teachers were reading what they took to be a direct and unmediated prose of personal experience, the most successful students were hard at work constructing the authorial persona of self-revelatory personal essays written in a decidedly non-academic style. To put it another way, the irony of process pedagogy is that teachers' desire to operate outside oppressive institutions and avoid the errors of the past only reinstituted the rhetoric of the belletristic tradition at the center of the writing classroom.[4]

As might be imagined, the original notion of written voice as the expressive potential of a unique individual has been widely critiqued on a number of fronts. In many cases, these critiques come out of movements and theories of writing (e.g., social constructivism) which were not yet known in composition studies when the voice metaphor made its original appearance. Alternative views of voice emanating from these movements include Lisa Ede's (1989) concept of "situational voice," which also has clear precedents in classical rhetoric:

> Just as you dress differently on different occasions, as a writer you assume different voices in different situations. If you're writing an essay about a personal experience, you may work hard to create a strong personal voice in your essay...If you're writing a report or essay exam, you will adopt a more formal, public tone. (1989; cited in Bowden, 1995, p. 175)

This situational view of voice also has close parallels with a major tenet of post-structuralist thought—that people have, by their very nature, multiple instead of unitary personalities or *subjectivities* (e.g., Foucault, 1980; Pennycook, 1996).

But perhaps the most influential alternative version of written voice has been derived from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (e.g., 1986), the Russian literary and linguistics scholar. His notion of *heteroglossia,* the idea that all language-in-use is made up of bits and pieces in effect borrowed from other language users and infused with their intentions (to put it oversimply), has suggested to some composition scholars that a writer's voice is inevitably multiple and intertextual (e.g., Yancey, 1994). In his own development of the theory, however, Bakhtin moved beyond this view, stating—in true dialectical style—that a language user must appropriate the other, prior voices inhabiting

his or her language, in Bakhtin's words "populat[ing] it with his own intention" (1986, quoted in Yancey, 1994, p. xiii).

Individualist Expression and Voice

Questions regarding the nature of written voice in relation to the individual—and the meaning and appropriate expression of individuality itself—point to our major concern with at least its more "expressivist" manifestations in teaching writing to non-native speakers of English. If it is true that the notion of the individual varies substantially across cultures, as has been widely described and argued (see, Markus & Kitayama, 1991 and Atkinson, 1997 for partial reviews), then a concept of written voice that centrally assumes the expression of a "unique inner self" may be problematic for some NNSs.

In a major review of the literature on conceptions of self across cultures, Markus and Kitayama (1991) distinguish cultural views which they term "independent" versus "interdependent" construals of self. As they describe these contrasting conceptions:

> In many Western cultures, there is a faith in the inherent separateness of distinct persons. The normative imperative of this [i.e., U.S.] culture is to become independent from others and to discover and express one's unique attributes (Johnson, 1985; Marsella et al., 1985; J. G. Miller, 1988; Shweder & Bourne, 1984). Achieving the cultural goal of independence requires construing oneself as an individual whose behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and action, rather than by reference to the thoughts feelings, and actions of others....In contrast, many non-Western cultures insist...on the fundamental connectedness of human beings to each other. A normative imperative of these cultures is to maintain this interdependence among individuals (De Vos, 1985; Hsu, 1985; Miller, 1988; Shweder & Bourne, 1984). Experiencing interdependence entails seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one's behavior is determined, contingent on, and to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship. (pp. 226-7).[5]

Numerous studies of language socialization have shown how children are socialized to such differing versions of selfhood basically from day one. Clancy (1986), for example, describes in detail the daily routine by which Japanese mothers inculcate in their children the twin social norms of empathy and conformity—arguably the two most important social skills in modern Japanese society. Empathy training is effected, for example, by constantly attributing feelings to others (including even inanimate objects) in order to mold socially appropriate responses. Thus, toys are often pointedly described by mothers as "pitiful" (i.e., to be felt sorry for—*kawaisoo* in Japanese) when their children

treat them roughly. Conformity training takes place when mothers indicate that their childrens' speech or actions are socially deviant, for instance by calling the unwanted behavior "strange" (*okashii* or *hen,* words that carry deep significance as tools of socialization and social control in Japanese society—Hendry, 1986) or "scary" (*kowai*).

In a second socialization study, Scollon and Scollon (1981) describe how, following middle class U.S. child-rearing practices, they socialized their infant daughter, Rachel, to take an individualist and more or less "objective" position in the course of her daily activities—to see herself as in some sense separated from the flow of social life. As a result, at two years of age Rachel commonly "fictionalized herself"—referring to herself in the third person and using conventional story structures, reading prosody, and literate performance frames to narrate her own activities This was in sharp contrast to the highly involved narrative approaches taken by the Athabaskan children she often played with, including those who were much older.

Other cross-cultural socialization research (e.g., Caudill & Weinstein, 1974; Heath, 1983, 1991; Matsumori, 1981 cited in Clancy, 1986, p. 218; Ochs, 1992; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) suggests how American middle class mothers go to great lengths to tacitly aid in constructing the identity of "autonomous individual" for their children. Child development researchers as far back as Piaget realized that "individual independence is a social fact, a product of civilization" (Piaget, 1928/1977, cited in Rogoff, 1991, p. 34).

Regarding, more specifically, differing expressions of self across cultures in writing, Scollon (1991) investigated the extreme difficulties his Taiwanese university EFL writers were having with the Elbow-based process approach he adopted in the classroom. On the basis of both the cross-cultural/anthropological literature treating notions of self in Chinese cultural contexts and his own empirical research (Scollon & Scollon, 1991), Scollon came to the general conclusion that:

> the stance of self-expression set by such writers as Elbow is so productive in North America because it is so squarely based on the western, individualist sense of self. For the same reason this stance is all but unintelligible to Chinese writers; at least it was to my students at Ching Yi. (p. 4)

More specifically, according to Scollon, his students appeared to adopt a view of self in their writing very similar to Markus and Kitayama's "interdependent" norm—one which "is not highly assertive, but seeks to accommodate others and in return receives enduring social support" (Chu, 1985, quoted in Scollon, 1991, p. 4). This approach made it all but impossible for the students to operate successfully under a process-based pedagogy, because:

> the writing process asks of the writer that he or she take the rhetorical position of an autonomous, rational mind, untroubled by the inconsistencies of the phenomenal

world and equally untroubled by the push and pull of human arrangements. This is a persona which western students are all too ready to adopt; to them it seems a natural intuition. (p. 11)

Scollon's students, on the other hand, were:

not writing primarily to express [themselves] but for the purpose of becoming integrated into a scholarly community. The purpose of student writing [in Taiwanese Chinese culture] is to learn to take on a scholarly voice in the role of commentator on the classics and on the scholarship of others. One is writing to pass on what one has received. (p. 7)

The notion of written voice, then, that Scollon found relevant in describing this community is the diametric opposite of the one commonly assumed by "personal voice" advocates, most notably Elbow himself (e.g., 1981, ch. 25, 1994).

A second study bearing on self and voice in writing across cultures is Li's (1996) semi-ethnographic account of what constitutes "good writing" in U.S. and PRC schools. Li asked high school writing teachers from both countries to do three things. First, she asked four teachers (two from each country) to select exceptionally well-done personal essays by their own or other students and to comment on what made them so good. She then circulated the different essays (in translated form, where appropriate) and their choosers' comments among the other teachers, asking for their reactions to both. Finally, she sent a subset of the essays to a larger group of 45 teachers (23 Chinese and 22 American), along with an open-ended survey querying their judgments in order to confirm the evaluations and their justifications she had earlier received from the group of four.

Although Li identified differences of judgment within the cultural groups in regard to particular essays, her major finding was that, in general, each group held distinct and divergent underlying principles of evaluation. The single greatest difference—and that on which all other differences depended, according to Li—concerned what each group saw as the wider function of school-based writing. For the Chinese teachers, such writing represented:

the acquisition and dissemination of an honorable way of life that conforms to certain established moral codes. Good writing, therefore, should carry a positive, or more desirably, a profound moral message; never mind whether it be a mere reiteration of a popular witticism or what parents or teachers have preached to the writer. (p. 90)

For the U.S. writing teachers, on the other hand:

[t]he primary function of writing...is the exploration and expression of "self." As Jane [an American teacher] expounded eloquently, "It is very important for writers to deal with life, to reflect, to look into themselves and the meaning of their lives. That's the whole purpose of writing as far as I am concerned."...Repetition of a

> known moral dictum is to [these teachers] slavishly following the convention at the expense of one's intellectual independence. (p. 91)

Not surprisingly, Li also found that the U.S. teachers put great emphasis on the notion of personal voice in student writing, given that "good writing should demonstrate the writer's unique perspective on life" (p. 93). These teachers stressed that language which sounded "phony" or "too literary" marked the writing as inauthentic—that the author had "moved far away from his natural voice" (p. 93). In contrast, "the notion that students should find their unique voice in their writing seemed an alien notion" (p. 93) to the Chinese teachers.

In a third study with implications for the expression of self and voice in writing across cultures, Ho (1998) investigated the English language learning strategies of technological university students in Taiwan. Interviewing 20 proficient EFL writers regarding their strategies for learning to write well in English, Ho found that, overwhelmingly, they stressed memorization and imitation over other strategies, and that these preferred strategies accorded with internalized social definitions of good writing in Chinese. In characterizing the latter, Ho (1998, p. 227) states:

> The most dominant type of essay for writing classes, for [university] joint entrance examinations, and for civil service examinations in Taiwan is the argumentative essay containing four parts or paragraphs. The topic of an argumentative essay is often a quotation from a classical text or a saying of an ancient sage. The student/writer is expected to paraphrase the quotation or the saying, argue for it, and conclude with remarks which support the validity of the concepts and beliefs presented in the quotation or saying and which demonstrate his or her conformity to traditional Chinese values....Elegant, polished style is very much valued in this kind of writing, for it indicates that the writer is versed in Chinese literature and the classics and has memorized many classic [sic] texts and four-character Chinese idioms. Being able to quote sentences from ancient texts and use idioms skillfully is considered one of the most valuable characteristics of a good writer. As Scollon (1991) has indicated, "The Chinese student is not writing primarily to express himself or herself...One is writing to pass on what one has received" (p. 7).

In accordance with this culturally defined model of good writing, Ho's interviewees described their preferred approaches to writing and learning to write better in English in terms like the following—terms which closely echoed these students' descriptions of how they wrote essays in Chinese:

> *Student 3*: I memorize beautiful phrases and sentences included in dictionaries, hoping that I may use them in future writing tasks....I quote or cite others' sentences and turn to others' essays for assistance and reference and turn to handouts containing famous quotations, axioms, and proverbs for reference in writing. (p. 232)

> *Student 4*: I consider it important to memorize sentences to write better...If the English teacher required me to write a long English essay...I would turn to famous sayings and sentences derived from famous writers and essays on the same topic. I

> would imitate what other people say and use their sentences in my essays. I would at most change a single word but I would not change the main frame or structure....If my English teacher required me to write long English essays, I would use famous sayings, proverbs, and quotable phrases quite often, just as I use them very often in writing Chinese essays, for I consider they are essential in writing Chinese and English essays. (p. 234)
>
> *Student 12*: I have the habit of memorizing beautiful sentences, and my memory bank now contains more and more quotable sentences. When writing an English essay, I will use them directly in the essay....If I happen to remember a proverb or saying or a well-put quotation I will try my best to use it in my English essay. I will produce many sentences which are related to that saying, proverb, or quotation or even distort my original intended meaning or plan just to use that proverb or saying or quotation. (p. 233)
>
> *Student 19*: I consider it very helpful and useful in reading English essays to learn how authors write. A lot of sentences can be taken from model essays to use in your own writings....I will turn to textbooks and broadcasting English magazines [i.e., magazines designed to accompany popular English-language radio shows] for imitation and reference. I turn to them to look for patterns I can use in writing. I turn for reference and imitation to English articles or essays dealing with topics similar to or related to the one I am dealing with. I study English essays and articles to help me to perform better in writing exams and writing assignments. (p. 233)

As Ho insists, these are not simply acontextual learner/writer strategies innovated by a few students at a single university. Rather, he concludes that "[t]heir emphases on imitation and memorization and their turning to other essays and articles for reference and imitation have their origins in their prior educational experiences and their cultural background" (p. 231). While Ho does not mention written voice per se in his analysis, his study does provide a good sense of how proficient Taiwanese EFL learners/writers envision the task of English writing in a university setting and suggests the relative lack of importance—or more accurately, the irrelevance—of strong expressions of an individualist self and personal voice in this activity.

But perhaps the most compelling evidence for widely differing notions of individuality across cultures, and their implications for written voice, comes from the personal stories of those who have attempted to transplant themselves from one culture to another that is widely distant. Fan Shen (1989), a PRC immigrant to the U.S., for example, tells of his stuggles with English composition on arriving in this country—struggles which eventually necessitated his "creating a new self," as he puts it. To his teachers' constant encouragement to "Be yourself", "Just write what you think," Shen responds:

> In order to write good English, I knew that I had to be myself, which actually meant not to be my Chinese self. It meant that I had to create an English self and be *that*

self. And to be that English self,...I had to accept the way a Westerner accepts himself in relation to the universe and society. (p. 461)

As for how Shen defined his "Chinese self":

the image or meaning that I attached to the word "I" or "myself" was...different than that of my [American] English teacher. In China, "I" is always subordinated to "We"—be it the working class, Party, the country, or some other collective body. Both political pressure and literary tradition require that "I" be somewhat hidden or buried in writings and speeches; presenting the "self" too obviously would give people the impression of being disrespectful of the Communist Party in political writings and boastful in scholarly writings. The word "I" has often been identified with another "bad" word, "individualism," which has become a synonym of selfishness in China... As a result, even if I had brilliant ideas [as a scholar], the "I" in my papers always had to show some modesty by not competing with or trying to stand above the names of ancient and modern authoritative figures....I had even committed what I can call "reverse plagiarism"...when I was in middle school: willfully attributing some of my thoughts to "experts" when I needed some arguments but could not find a suitable quotation from a literary or political "giant." (p. 460)

From this starting point, Shen initially went about the rather challenging task of "creating a new self" by doing such things as imagining himself reborn in a new body with its head on upside down, or crawling out of "my old identity, the timid humble, modest Chinese 'I,'" and creeping into my new identity (often in the form of a new skin, or a mask), the confident, assertive, and aggressive English "I" (p. 462). In his classroom writing, Shen set about making intentional—and what he considered "pompous" and "immodest"—displays of individuality in his papers, for example by using "I" whenever possible and deleting quotations from other authors. Eventually, after considerable frustration and difficulty, Shen became more comfortable with his new "self." Despite this apparently happy outcome, however, we would simply ask at this point: How realistic is it to regularly expect or demand of our NNS students that they basically *become someone else?* Might not the notion of personal voice, at least, for some of them in some sense *require* that? And where does this place such students vis à vis those who have received "personal voice training" with their mother's milk, so to speak, and practiced it daily for the intervening twenty or so years? A growing number of case studies of NNS and bilingual students struggling and not infrequently failing in U.S. universities and colleges (e.g., Fox, 1994; Johns, 1991; Belcher, 1994; Schneider & Fujishima, 1995) reveal that laboring under such exteme cultural-academic demands does not always produce happy outcomes or desirable results. In the heartfelt words of a Nepalese student quoted by Fox (1994, p. 109):

> What is the process, what is the way we can change so radically here [in the U.S. university] so that we can be accepted, so that we can gain recognition?...Foreign students have been getting recognition from the ways they have been thinking and communicating and writing in their previous settings. And all of a sudden they lose all that. You can't imagine what happens to these people! They become very irritated. Very much miserable.

PEER REVIEWING AND INDIVIDUALISM

A second realm in the writing classroom in which conflicts regarding the presentation of an individualist self seem apparent is the peer review process. Peer review has on the whole been regarded as beneficial in L2 writing instruction, inasmuch as it provides student writers with added motivation for revision (Koch, 1982; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992) and encourages anticipating the expectations of otherwise-absent readers (Mittan, 1989). However, it has also been criticized for having a tacit basis in various social practices that may not extend beyond the bounds of mainstream American culture (e.g., Allaei & Connor, 1990; Carson & Nelson, 1994; Carson & Nelson, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Connor, 1996; Linden-Martin, 1997; Zhang, 1995).

One such American mainstream social practice is individualism. While peer review sessions are seemingly set up as group activities—in which peers comment on one anothers' essays in groups—they serve, in actuality, as mechanisms through which the individual is substantially fronted (Berlin, 1987; Carson, 1992; Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; Spigelman, 1998). Thus, group members are expected to comment on why particular elements of an individual's essay are effective or lacking and are encouraged to support these views with examples from the essay itself. By laying out what they think about a piece of writing and why, reviewers are also expected to express themselves individualistically, and so to develop their own critical writing/revising skills. The author likewise participates in the group on the assumption that she or he will take away whatever comments have been given for the purpose of *individual* improvement, as made clear by Elbow (1973, p. 126, italics in original):

> At first...you depend on all this feedback you are getting: you wonder how you wrote anything before without it. But after a while you don't care about it so much....[I]nstead of letting the standards of the readers call the shots for you, gradually you come to make your own decisions as to what is good and bad, and use the responses of others to help you fulfill *your own* goals, not their goals.

NNS writers—at least those from cultural backgrounds where more interdependent views of the individual are normative and who thus have been socialized to value group relations very highly—may for these reasons experience conflicts

in the peer review context; out of a sense of identification with and concern for other group members, reviewers are more likely to say what they believe will not disrupt the group (Allaei & Connor, 1990; Carson & Nelson, 1996). Matsumoto (1988) clearly states the basic notion underlying this claim in describing Japanese norms of politeness:

> A Japanese generally must understand where s/he stands in relation to other members of the group or society, and must acknowledge his/her dependence on the others. Acknowledgment and maintenance of the relative position of others, rather than preservation of an individual's proper territory, governs all social interactions. (Matsumoto, 1988, p. 405)

Likewise, in a study of recent PRC school textbooks, Lin (1993) quotes a 1990 textbook to support her claim that "the texts always point out that the collective interest is most important" (p. 5):

> We young people have to nourish collective consciousness and to learn to deal correctly with the relationship between personal interests and collective interests. When they are in conflict, we should consciously place collective interests first and personal interests second. If it is necessary that we have to sacrifice personal interests, we should have the courage to give up all, including ourselves, to protect collective interests. (*Citizenship,* 1990, cited in Lin, 1993, p. 5)[6]

Peer review group members socialized to such views, then, may be more likely to say what they think will not threaten the positive "face" of their peers (Allaei & Connor, 1990; Carson & Nelson, 1996) than responding "from the heart," as it were. According to Miyoshi (1989, p. 39), for example, "discussion and criticism...imply dissent and protest, which most [Japanese people] seem eager to avoid."[7]

In a recent empirical study, Carson and Nelson (1996; see also Nelson & Carson, 1998) found that students from the PRC and Taiwan had a difficult time usefully commenting on their peers' essays.[8] In comparing these students with their native Spanish-speaking classmates, Carson and Nelson discovered that the former were reluctant to criticize others' essays partly out of a need to preserve the peers' face and maintain group harmony, but also because they did not feel that they had enough authority to do so. One Chinese student voiced her reluctance in this regard in the following terms:

> I think a lot and then realize that I'm not a critic, I'm just a reader, I read something, I cannot say, "Oh the writer is wrong"....[Being a critical reader] I don't think is a good idea. Because I think every time I read something, he give me the information. But we don't have the right to judge it—especially for this essay—because we have different ideas. (p. 12)

A second manifestation of interdependent views of self therefore also seems to be operating in the peer review process for students from cultural contexts that

favor them: Cultures oriented to more interdependent representations of self appear to emphasize the relatively strict observance of social hierarchies (Chao, 1994; Nakane, 1970; Roland, 1988; S. Scollon, 1989). When asked to critique others' work, these students may find it less natural than do some of their counterparts (and certainly than do many native English-speaking U.S. students) because it implies assuming a higher-status role with someone who is really a peer. Scollon (1991), Powers and Gong (1995), and Rao (1996) maintain as much for native Chinese-speaking students in discussing the Confucian origins of social structure in Chinese cultural contexts: Confucian precepts mandate that each person occupy their proper place in society and behave accordingly, without disrupting the social order.

CRITICAL THINKING AND INDIVIDUALISM

Another important concept used in the writing classroom in which individualism seems to play a central role is critical thinking. According to Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996b) and Atkinson (1997), what is commonly and unproblematically referred to as critical thinking is in fact ill-defined and implicit, more in the nature of a social practice (as defined briefly above; see Gee, 1990; Atkinson, 1997 for more extended definitions) than a well-articulated and straightforward educational concept.[9] Atkinson (1997, p. 80) explicitly connects the social practice of critical thinking with individualism:

> Cultures that view individuals as primary units appear to permit—and even depend on—relatively unconstrained individual activity and expression. Where such individual activity exists, individual conflict and competition seem to be inevitable. Notions of the primacy of the individual and their consequences underlie the social practice of critical thinking at a fundamental level: the very concept of "critical" presupposes that individual conflict and dissensus are a social reality, if not a tool for achieving socially desirable ends, while "thinking"—at least in a western context—assumes the locus of thought to be within the individual.

Scollon (1995; Scollon & Scollon, 1995) and Pennycook (1996) trace the genealogy of a form of literacy (called "essayist literacy" by Gee [1990] and Scollon & Scollon [1981]) from its original roots in the valorization of the individual (versus God) in Renaissance humanism and Enlightenment rationalism, through the Romantic period, up to its various manifestations in present-day academic writing. This approach to written discourse "places a high value on individual autonomy [and] rationality...[a]long with...a now familiar group of characteristics, often inaccurately attributed to literacy, of analysis, originality, decontextualization, and objectivity" (Scollon, 1995, p. 25).

Based on her decade-long ethnographic work with three different social groups in the Piedmont Carolinas (Heath, 1983; 1991, pp. 12-13) describes the induction into the social practice of critical thinking that mainstream U.S. children receive as part of their primary socialization:

> Mainstreamers view infants as individuals and orient them to see themselves as individuals who have the right and obligation to voice their judgments against those of others, so long as they respect rules and roles in doing so....Through questioning, they test their propositions [about the nature of the world] on their parents, who value their children's display of knowledge about the world....2-year-olds move from a world of all no's to the abundant questioning and sharing of experiences of 3- and 4-year-olds. Much of the early book reading and game playing that mainstream parents do with their children encourages youngsters to compare, complement, and supplement the information of the books they read. As they reach 8 to 10 years of age, they take up activities sponsored by community organizations....At home and in community based activities, youngsters learn to display knowledge, consider its relevance for action, and challenge the ideas of others in gradually molded acceptable verbal forms. Hence, without explicit teaching about the need to approach information from others conditionally, mainstream children learn in their everyday worlds acceptable ways to express their skepticism....But these children learn more than this on their way to becoming critical thinkers; they learn to think about how they will argue their position, with more evidence than just their own previous experience. They learn that they must separate their experience from the proposition or general principle they wish to maintain; and they must, more often than not, structure their argument while in the midst of receiving information from others. Mainstream, literate-oriented families prepare their children to disengage from their own experience to attend to general argumentative principles by modeling talk about the language of argument within households (e.g., "But that doesn't make sense. You just said X. You can't now say Y!"). These redundant, repetitive, and multiply reinforced ways of socializing mainstream children as individual knowers and verbal contestants provide the bedrock discourse forms that sustain what schools define as critical thinking. The irony is that those who can practice them in school, more often than not, have to *learn* them outside school—through family and community life. [Note: Paragraph breaks in original not reproduced here]

The import of Heath's final sentence becomes clearer when we consider that the other two social groups she studied—working class African Americans living in the same town and white millworkers living in the surrounding countryside—took approaches to socializing their children that varied markedly from the one described here. Further, in neither of the two non-mainstream groups did the children's socialized skills mesh with those sponsored in the schools they attended, leading to disproportionately high rates of school failure among them. Heath's description of mainstream U.S. socialization practices has been confirmed by the work of other researchers (e.g., Scollon & Scollon, 1981, reviewed in part above; Taylor, 1983).

In the realm of teaching composition, U.S. university composition programs frequently place strong emphasis on the development and use of students' critical thinking skills (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995), as represented at all levels: institutional "thought styles" (Fleck, 1979), public justifications, new instructor training, syllabi, curricula, and teachers' pedagogical practices. Composition textbooks written primarily for L1 students but used frequently with L2 writers also reflect a similar emphasis (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996a, 1996b), encouraging students to take one side on issues such as gun control, animal rights, and TV violence, and to argue strongly and assertively for their position (see Johns, 1991; McKay, 1989 for students having trouble writing on such topics). Students are expected to analyze the situation critically, convincingly support their opinions, anticipate and defend against counter-arguments, and judiciously weigh various kinds of evidence that may strengthen their positions. All these points, it will be noticed, also have direct implications for developing and asserting one's individuality: articulating individual stances and decisions on such issues, sharpening one's own stand against (sometimes-hypothetical) others that disagree, and empowering one's individual point of view with whatever resources of evidence/support that can be brought to bear. Such approaches have frequently been found to be problematic for L2 writers from more interdependently oriented cultural backgrounds (e.g., Cadman, 1997; Fox, 1994; Choi, 1988; Kobayashi, 1984a, 1984b, and Oi, 1984, all cited in Silva, 1993)

As has been argued elsewhere (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996a, 1996b), such assignments are based on at least the following assumptions, all of which appear to be foundational in middle class/mainstream U.S. culture: (1) that the survival of a democracy depends partly on raising critical questions about social issues (Cederblom & Paulsen, 1987); (2) that the U.S. public should be prepared to take decisions on such issues; and (3) that these are areas around which honest disagreement is possible (McPeck, 1981). Laudable though these goals may be, the implications they have for students from more interdependently oriented cultures are significant in that these students do not necessarily share appropriate cultural frames or assumptions, particularly where strongly voicing their views may violate sociocultural norms based on overall consensus and the relative avoidance of personal disagreement and social discord (e.g., Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Cadman, 1997; Fox, 1994; Li, 1996; Matsumoto, 1988; Shen, 1989).

TEXTUAL OWNERSHIP AND INDIVIDUALISM

The phrase "textual ownership" encompasses such issues as plagiarism, the documentation of sources, and authorship. It also raises—albeit in not so obvious ways—issues regarding the nature of learning, memory, culture, and attitudes

toward the language being used as a source, as well as widely differing conceptions of the individual (Bowden, 1996; Duranti, 1993; Pennycook, 1994b, 1996; Scollon, 1995).

In general, U.S. educators see instances of plagiarism as violations of honor and morals, and normally sympathetic teachers are often turned into angry and self-righteous guardians of truth by them (Kolich, 1983). This view is predicated on cultural assumptions that many in the U.S. share: Texts are their authors' personal property, and helping oneself to a text without permission from the author amounts to stealing. Such views are clearly evident across the academy, though they may take on even greater urgency in the teaching of composition. Many if not most composition textbooks, for instance, have sections on how to document sources, the importance of doing so, and the dangers of plagiarism (Kroll, 1988). Thus, the popular freshman writing textbook *Writing Arguments* (Ramage & Bean, 1994) describes plagiarism as "nothing less than cheating and theft [which]...demands serious punishment" (p. 283), and offers the following reasons for citing one's sources:

> (1) It reflects your own honesty and seriousness as a researcher; (2) it enables the reader to find the source of the reference and read further and sometimes to verify that the source has been correctly used; (3) it adds the authority of experts to your arguments (p. 283)

Descriptions such as these—and there are many like them—reveal how seriously practitioners of composition want students to regard the importance of "individual expression," and the gravity of borrowing others' language and passing it off as one's own.

While such views may indeed be justified in an individualistically oriented culture, they are based on a complex web of cultural assumptions that may not transfer well beyond cultural boundaries. Writing partly in the context of Hong Kong's university system, Pennycook (1994b) suggests some of the cultural complexities:

> Plagiarism needs to be understood relative to the context of the concept (i.e., Western academic concepts of authorship, knowledge, and ownership), the context of the students (their cultural and educational backgrounds), the context of the institution (the demands of English-medium institutions in a colonial context), the context of the specific tasks required (assumptions about background knowledge and language ability), and the context of the actual use and "misuse" of text (the merits and demerits of the actual case of textual use). (p. 278)

This quotation is taken from Pennycook's response to Deckert's (1993) study wherein the latter tested 211 native Hong Kong university students on their knowledge of plagiarism by having them rate six passages based on a newspaper article. Interpreting his results, Deckert concluded that there was little consensus among his students regarding the occurrence of plagiarism. Pennycook then

administered the same six passages to 22 native and non-native speaker colleagues at the English Centre at Hong Kong University, finding that their answers varied almost as much as those of Deckert's subjects. From this and other evidence, Pennycook surmised that "if students cannot recognize plagiarism, then they are unlikely to be helped much by teachers who cannot recognize it either" (p. 278).

The issue of plagiarism goes far beyond being able to recognize particular instances of it, however. It is integrally tied to cultural notions of effective learning and knowing, as well as to how cultures view individuality and its appropriate expression (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991, ch. 2; Currie, 1997; Fox, 1994; Scollon, 1991). In interdependently oriented cultural contexts like India, for example, both home-based and school-based educational practices—early socialization and literacy training, formal assessment procedures, teaching methodologies, pedagogical practices, and the worldviews of teachers, parents, and other "authority figures"—reinforce the centrality of memorization at an everyday level. In the home, for instance, Brahmin male children (and in the case of the first author at least, female children as well) are supposed to have memorized particular Sanskrit chants and mantras and are expected to rehearse and produce them on particular (religious) occasions. In the school, the importance of memorizing is reinforced when the child is expected to produce various kinds of factual information from memory, most especially in essay-type exams where accurate factual recall and rote production—including the production of whole previously memorized essays—are highly evaluated. At almost all levels of education, then, and certainly still at the undergraduate level (Ramanathan & Atkinson, in preparation), students are heavily involved in memorizing texts and information in order to demonstrate academic competence and achieve academic success.[10]

What constitutes successful learning in more interdependently oriented cultures is therefore often likely to differ from its counterpart in more independently oriented ones. Students socialized to the requirements of the former learn to write not so much to present an original, strong, individual self, but to show how much they have internalized of the transmittable traditions of their cultures (Scollon, 1991). At least in the case of India, they learn to align themselves with traditional (and sometimes non-traditional) texts by being able to reproduce them since the degree to which one can do so is often more highly valued than writing something "new." The various statements made by Ho's (1998) subjects reported above in the section entitled "Individualist Expression and Voice," as well as the findings reported there of Scollon (1991) and Li (1996), suggest that very similar approaches are highly valued in Chinese cultural contexts (see also Carson, 1992; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Fox, 1994).

CONCLUSION: INVISIBLE PEDAGOGY, INDIVIDUALISM, AND THE ROLE OF CROSS-CULTURAL WRITING RESEARCH

A number of educational researchers (e.g., Atkinson, 1985; Bernstein, 1973; Delpit, 1988; Inghilleri, 1989; Kalantzis & Cope, 1993) have developed the concept of a "hidden pedagogy" in exploring the generally subpar performance of some sociocultural groups in Anglo-American and Australian schools. They relate this hidden pedagogy to the implicit, apparently non-directive nature of educational ways of acting and being that are covertly based on middle-class, mainstream social practices and are enshrined and publically justified in a "progressivist" pedagogy and philosophy of education. Thus, according to Kalantzis and Cope (1993, p. 57):

> Lisa Delpit argues that progressivism's apparent anti-authoritarianism is a cultural hoax—a cultural product of a White liberalism which, underneath, is as authoritarian as any....Here veiled, rather than explicit commands are used to enforce adult authority. 'Would you like to do this next, Betty?' [Middle-class] White children in American schools know that this means they are expected to do something but to [non-middle-class] Black children this means the...teacher has abdicated authority, so the class reacts accordingly. The problem for Black students is misreading the cues of an alien discourse.

One important manifestation of this invisible pedagogy that has been investigated in some depth by researchers is process writing (Delpit, 1988; Gilbert, 1989; Inghilleri, 1989; Kalantzis & Cope, 1993). They point out that the non-directive teacher behavior, inductive learning (including the ability to induce organizational structure in the process of writing—Inghilleri, 1989), and discovery and assertion of self that are supposed to go on in the expressivist process-writing classroom really advantage those who have been socialized into these practices from an early age according to a highly child-centered, middle-class form of socialization.

Likewise, the concepts discussed in the present paper—voice, peer reviewing, critical thinking, and textual ownership—would seem to have a common grounding in the invisible pedagogy of progressivist education. Their underlying basis in individualism, as manifested in the all-important progressivist principle of developing autonomous, self-actualized individuals, is in fact at the core of progressivism (Pennycook, 1997). Thus, Cope and Kalantzis (1993, p. 58) see an intimate connection between educational progressivism and the metaphor of personal voice: "The motivation in progressivism...is based entirely on the individual's voice, the individual's sense of destiny." Similarly, Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996b) connect the development of critical thinking as an important educational

goal in the U.S. to the influence of John Dewey, a major influence on educational progressivist thought.

It is also fruitful in this regard to view recent critiques of cross-cultural writing research (Raimes & Zamel, 1996; Zamel, 1997; Spack, 1997; Raimes, 1998) from the standpoint of a progressivist philosophy of education that valorizes individualism above all else. According to Spack (1997, p. 772), for example:

> [T]eachers and researchers need to view students as individuals, not as members of a cultural group, in order to understand the complexity of writing in a language they are in the process of acquiring.

Numerous questions might immediately be posed in response to this comment—some with no direct relationship to an underlying progressivism, but which are nonetheless crucial to ask: Why, for example, exclude *any* potentially relevant knowledge at all that might help us to help our students? Isn't the teaching of L2 writing already complex enough without automatically ruling certain kinds of potentially helpful information out of court? More directly related to individual-centered progressivism are the questions: What is it that leads one to juxtapose cultural group membership and individuality? Why does individuality need to be pared down to something acultural? Shouldn't a mature, sophisticated, multicultural understanding of individuals take their culturality fully into account, instead of denying or avoiding it? What is the import of this statement if not the opposite extreme of attempting to reduce all individuals to cultural types—reducing individuals to *a*cultural types?

A likely answer, to our way of thinking, can be found in an important corollary of progressivist approaches in education—universalism (Ellsworth, 1989; Pennycook, 1997). By ruling cultural influence and knowledge out of the picture one becomes able to assume that *everyone is like me*—in the sense of believing that, while we may have different preferences and make different choices, we must all basically think of ourselves in relation to society in more or less the same way, i.e., individualistically. Thus, while we are all individuals, we are all individuals on the same basic plan—our basic individualism is not at issue.

In his work on ideology and composition teaching, Berlin (1988, p. 486) identifies a similar universalizing assumption as the core of "expressivist" (or, in Berlin's terms, "expressionist") writing pedagogy:

> The underlying conviction of expressionists is that when individuals are spared the distorting effects of a repressive social order their privately determined truths will correspond to the privately determined truths of all others: my best and deepest vision supports the same universal and external laws as everyone else's best and deepest vision. Thus, in *Writing Without Teachers* Elbow admits that his knowledge about writing was gathered primarily from personal experience, and that he has no reservations about "making universal generalizations upon a sample of one" (p. 16). Murray is even more explicit in his first edition of *A Writer Teaches Writing:* "the

> writer is on a search for himself. If he finds himself he will find an audience, because all of us have the same common core. And when he digs deeply into himself and is able to define himself, he will find others who will read with a shock of recognition what he has written" (p. 4).

Advocates of progressivism, of which expressivist writing pedagogy is in large part a manifestation, therefore make the tacit assumption that *everyone is fundamentally like us, so everyone must want what we want.* Or, to formulate it differently: Everyone is an individual, *but they are individuals on our terms.* Surely, this is not a principle that will help us to understand NNSs *on their terms,* or that will allow us to use this understanding to help students negotiate the complex demands of academic literacy in North American, British, or Oceanic universities.

What *will* help—and what much cross-cultural writing research has so far contributed to and will continue to contribute to—is a complex, multidimensional understanding of individuals-in-context. The twenty or so years of socialization and education into particular ways of knowing and being in the world that international undergraduates bring with them to "Western" anglophone universities should not be considered insignificant or ruled out of court, any more than it should be mistaken for the full measure of the person. What we know about cultures and their varying approaches to knowing, meaning, and being should not be feared and denied. Rather it should be seen as integral to personhood, part and parcel of the individuality of the living, breathing, thinking, feeling, laughing and crying human beings that we meet everyday in our classrooms.

In closing her study of what constitutes "good writing" in U.S. and PRC schools, Li (1996, p. 127) expresses what she believes to be the practical outcome of her project. We too would like to close with Li's statement, since it captures for us the vitally important educational role of much cross-cultural writing research:

> To make judicious judgment about the sources of students' problems [and, we would add, strengths and coping strategies]...writing teachers should acquaint themselves with students' native cultures....I hope this study on "good writing" in cross-cultural context serves to stretch the imagination of educators in both countries to understand the cultural bias in the standards many of them so rigorously maintain, without having to go through the troublesome experience of Fan Shen.

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NOTES

1. This body of research would require a separate article—or quite possibly a book—to review. Studies which we cite elsewhere in this article include: Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, 1985 in sociology; Kitayama and Markus, 1991 in psychology; Atkinson, 1997; Carson, 1992; Clancy, 1986; Crago, 1992; Heath, 1983, 1991; Matsumoto, 1988; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Ramanathan and Kaplan, 1996b; Scollon, 1991, 1995; Scollon and Scollon, 1981, 1995 in linguistics, education, and anthropology; Ishii and Bruneau, 1994 in communication studies; and Shen, 1989; Li, 1996 in composition studies. Atkinson, 1997; Carson, 1992; Kitayama and Markus, 1991; and Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986 provide partial reviews of this research.

As is well-known, the concept of "culture" has come in for a large amount of criticism in recent years (see Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999, for a brief summary of criticisms). While we have sympathy for such viewpoints, particularly where they serve to correct earlier views of culture(s) as monolithic, static, essentialist, and all-encompassing, they also indicate to us a pendulum-like swing toward the opposite extreme—*that there is basically no such thing as culture.* In fact, as is often the case in such matters, a middle-ground position on culture seems far more tenable; i.e., an understanding of culture in terms of the tendencies, ideologies, and socializable patterns and practices of social groups that may indeed be resisted and subverted to the benefit of individuals—but the normalizing power of which is also acknowledged and affirmed by such resistant acts, which may also incur real individual costs. Significantly, many of the critics of "culture" themselves seem to partake of a view similar to our middle-ground position (e.g., Clifford, 1986; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997), as indicated by their refusal to dispense with the notion altogether.

For present purposes, we therefore define culture/s as "bodies of knowledge, structures of understanding, conceptions of the world,...collective representations" (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p.166), social practices and tendencies, and group ideologies through which, by virtue of participating in, one is marked as a member of a social group, or discourse (Gee, 1990).

2. See the strikingly similar comment of Kato (1972, reported in Barnlund, 1975, p. 89): "In Japan, speech is not silver or copper or brass—it is scrap." The import of this comment, if not the precise metallurgic imagery, is virtually identical to that of the student quoted by Harklau. Many similar quotations (e.g., Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p. 190) appear in the literature.

3. At least two major attempts—Yancey (1994) and Elbow (1994b)—have recently been made to sort out the various definitions and conceptions of "voice" as it is used in L1 composition theory and practice. While these are clearly important efforts, we are more interested in this

paper in the subtle social-practice nature of the concept—and its problematic availability to L2/language minority writers—than we are with attempts to promote (and perhaps reify) the notion by resolving conflicting views.

4. Trimbur's statement seems also to address the apparent contradiction—pointed out to us first by Meryl Siegal—that the affinity with oral communication implicated in Bowden's second characteristic of personal voice is at odds with her third point, its distinctly literary flavor. Like Trimbur, Li (1996, pp. 124-5) points out that the "natural" qualities of "strongly voiced" prose favored by the American teachers in her cross-cultural study were in fact anything but natural—that they involved taking on a particular literary persona with studied casualness at its core.

5. Despite their own attempts to qualify its categorical nature, Markus and Kitayama's characterization effectively establishes independent versus interdependent views of self as binary opposites. For us, they more accurately represent opposite ends of a continuum, and cultural ideologies and social practices rather than absolute cultural categories (see note 1, above). Thus, variation in this regard within and across particular social groups and individual members of larger cultures is certainly possible (and always to be expected) without threatening the larger generalization that, overall, demonstrable cultural differences may exist. The quotation from Heath (1991) beginning this article points to variation across U.S. social groups in norms for the expression of individuality, while Belcher (1997) suggests intracultural gender variation in this area. It is partly for these reasons that language socialization researchers such as Heath (e.g., 1983), Ochs and Schieffelin (e.g., 1984), and Ron and Suzanne Wong Scollon (e.g., 1981) use terms such as "mainstream" or "middle class" American culture rather than referring to "American culture" or "U.S. culture" in general. Any description of a whole culture is obviously a blunt instrument, but that by no means invalidates the point that there *are* widely-held cultural norms within social groups and among peoples with closely shared histories—in short, that *people do live culturally.*

6. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton's (1985) characterization of middle class U.S. individualism provides a useful contrast to Li's and Matsumoto's formulations:

> We [Americans] believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious. Our highest and noblest aspirations, not only for ourselves, but for those we care about, for our society and for the world, are closely linked to our individualism. (p. 142)

7. These comments, of course, should in no way be taken to suggest that Japanese or Chinese people do not hold views representing their personal opin-

ions. An important distinction is in fact made in Japanese language, thought, and communicative practice between *honne*—one's true opinion, basically—and *tatemae*—what it is appropriate to say in social circumstances (Doi, 1973). Hu's (1944, cited in Scollon, 1995, p.14) *miànzi* versus *lian* contrast in Chinese would seem to capture something of the same basic distinction.

8. Although this study is based on a small sample—Carson and Nelson videotaped 18 peer-response group sessions involving 11 international students over a period of six weeks, and then conducted in-depth interviews (using the videotapes to prompt recall and discussion) involving three L1 Chinese speaking and two L1 Spanish speaking participants—we believe that the results accord with a body of practical knowledge that is widely shared by L2 writing practitioners (e.g., Allaei & Connor, 1990) and to that extent is generalizable. All research ultimately depends for its validation on a community of practice (see, for example, Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Latour, 1987; Mishler, 1990), and such validation is particularly important in the case of situated/qualitative research of the type performed by Carson and Nelson (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Mishler, 1990).

9. As made clear in our earlier work on critical thinking (Atkinson, 1997; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996b), attempting to give discrete definitions of notions that function substantially as social practices is tricky, inevitably reductive and reifying, and quite possibly misguided. Nonetheless, for the purposes of the present paper we would suggest that definitions of critical thinking focusing on the skills underlying conventional "Western" academic skepticism and rationality (e.g., McPeck, 1981) are probably as close as one can get to an accurate definition of this particular social practice, at least when discussing critical thinking in relation to formal schooling. Obviously, there are proponents of particular brands of critical thinking theory and pedagogy that vary more or less widely from this one who would find our definition problematic (e.g., Benesh, 1993); some of these alternative possibilities are covered in Atkinson (1997, p. 74, note 3).

10. According to Schiffman (1996, pp.171-2), the emphasis on memorization in modern Indian society has roots in the powerful hold of oral traditions (though we would add that these are oral traditions that have existed in many cases in complex symbiotic relationships with sophisticated literate traditions for thousands of years):

> [A] cornerstone of Indian linguistic culture is surely the reliance on orality and the elaboration of complicated methods of oral transmission of language. This continues to be one of the hardest facts about Indian linguistic culture for outsiders to the tradition to accept, because it contradicts their theoretical notions of what is possible and what is not possible....This ability to memorize things seems to be highly valued in the culture in many ways, and can be observed in many other contexts, for example, the recent press reports of a young Indian man, Rajan Mahadevan, who, having already memorized the value of Π to 31,811 places, has now declared his intention to memorize it (the value of Π) to the millionth place. It is hard to imagine

another culture on earth where anyone would even want to do this: In Indic culture it seems not at all extraordinary.

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