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Deborah Brandt: Sponsors of Literacy

Pgs. 331-349; Questions: Pg. 351 (1-3)

Summary:

In Deborah Brandt’s article *Sponsors of Literacy*, she attempts to show how people do not just become literate on their own. Brandt is stating that literacy is sponsored by the things around you; such as people, institutions, and circumstances. She also says how there are instances where people “misappropriate” a literacy sponsor’s intentions by using a particular literacy for their own ends rather than for the sponsor’s. Another topic Brandt covers is that literacy sponsors can disempower and prevent people from becoming literate. She believes that we should assist and study individuals in pursuit of literacy, and also recognize how literacy is in pursuit of them

Questions for Discussion:

1. **How does Brandy define literacy sponsor? What are the characteristics of a literacy sponsor?**

Brandt defines literary sponsor as forces that shape out literacy learning and practices, because people don’t just become literate on their own. Literacy is sponsored by people, institutions, and circumstances that make it possible for one to become literate. Characteristics of a literacy sponsor are altruistic people who have a personal interest in sponsoring literacy. Literacy sponsors can range from older siblings to auto manufacturers.

1. **How does Brandt support her claim that sponsors always have something to gain from their sponsorship? Can you provide any examples from your own experience?**

Brandt supports her claim that sponsors always have something to gain from their sponsorship by talking about the 20th century accounts with the ads in the magazines, radio, tv, also sponsors get advertisement when they sponsor a team therefore they get business through teaching kids how to play a sport.

1. **How do the sponsored sometimes “misappropriate” their literacy lessons?**

Brandt states that people “misappropriate” a literacy sponsors intensions by using a particular literacy for their own ends rather than for the sponsors. And that the tension between people and their literacy sponsors illustrates a point in thinking about the acquisition of literacy and how each of us becomes literate.

1. **Consider Brandt’s claim that literacy sponsors “help to organize and administer stratified systems of opportunity and access, and they raise the literacy stakes in struggles for competitive advantage”. What does Brandt mean by the term stratified? What “stakes” is she referring to?**

Brandt claims that literacy sponsors “help to organize and administer stratified systems of opportunity and access, and they raise the literacy stakes in struggles for competitive advantage”. What Brandt means by the term stratified is that access to literature is more spread out than the years before. When she refers to “stakes” she is talking about an unstratisfied system of opportunity and the struggle between different standards of living.

Expansion:

Debora Brandt’s article created a nexus to a topic that was covered in my War and Violence class. On page 337, Brandt states that “affluent people from high-caste racial groups have multiple and redundant contacts with powerful literacy sponsors as a routine part of their economic and political privileges. Poor people and those from low-caste racial groups have less consistent, less politically secured access to literary sponsors”. This quote ties into the theory by Karl Marx (1818-1883) that states “the most important features of a society are its economic classes and their relations to each other”. Brandt’s quote also ties into Pierre Bourdieu’s theory that says that “society is invested in keeping the lower class at the lower class despite the American Dream; “we” have an interest in keeping our social structure in place”.

All three of these quotes tie together in a real life situation such as receiving higher education. As of now, illegal immigrants, whether they have lived here since they were 2 months old or even 10 years of age , cannot attend higher education courses past high school. The only exception to this rule is if the individual waits until after all of the enrolled students select their classes, and then gets placed in the leftover classes for a much higher tuition. My question is why are these individuals not being offered the same access to education as their peers they grew up with? Many of my friends that I went to school with from elementary school until high school were unable to attend college. Several moved back to their home countries while others stayed in the United States waiting out the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act.

Another quote from Brandt’s article states that “sponsors help organize and administer stratified systems of opportunity and access, and they raise their literacy stakes in struggles for competitive advantage” (pg344). Adding to question 4, I think that this quote also ties into the situation of pursuit for higher education because if higher education is unavailable to certain people due to where they are from, then without the opportunity of education these peers of mine are forced to work right out of high school or are even more likely to go to jail or prison. Therefore, the stakes are definitely raised and the access to literature is spread out.