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Expanding Narrative Representations: A Study of TA Preparation Programs in Rhetoric and Composition

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EXPANDING NARRATIVE REPRESENTATIONS:
A STUDY OF TA PREPARATION PROGRAMS
IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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According to Shari J. Stenberg (2005), if the field of rhetoric and composition wants to initiate “disciplinary and pedagogical change” we need to focus on teacher-preparation sites, the place where we shape the next generation of our professoriate (p. 30). However, these sites are not immune from the very forces that have shaped the divided discipline of English studies, and until we examine these sites more thoroughly through historical and qualitative research, we are bound to continue replicating the very system we want to change. As such, the purpose of this study is to use both historical and qualitative research to examine TA programs. In order to facilitate change, we have to understand the myths of the old order (Freire, 1970/2007), how they have come to shape rhetoric and composition, and how they have shaped and continue to shape the way we educate our future teachers. Furthermore, there is evidence that the narrow framework of disciplinarity used to discuss TA preparation has created a limited understanding of those involved in TA programs—both TA educators and graduate students. By getting into the TA preparation classroom and studying it instead of just theorizing about it, we not only learn how myths of the old order have been operating in these settings but we begin to weaken their hold through awareness and understanding, narrative and dialogue.