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Abstract approved:

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This thesis proposes expanding the locations where literacy narratives are currently used as readings and as writing assignments and considering broad conceptions of the types and uses of literacy narratives read in classrooms. In particular, this thesis asserts the value of expanding the literacy narratives read beyond the current canonical texts and of locating literacy narratives not only in composition but in three other university settings: first-year seminars, introductory courses to the major, and Writing in the Disciplines courses. Within these settings, literacy narratives can be used to help students develop identities as university students and as professionals within their disciplines. Using the language and theories of New Literacy Studies, a pedagogical framework is proposed for teaching literacy narratives across the disciplines. This framework is then applied to three literacy narratives written by professionals from diverse disciplines, demonstrating the usefulness of this tool for teachers assigning literacy narratives to be read or written within their classes.

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Literacy Narratives Across the Curriculum

by
Marjorie Coffey

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APPROVED:

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Major Professor, representing English

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Chair of the Department of English

____

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Marjorie Coffey, Author

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Literacy Narratives Across the Curriculum

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

I grew up in a house full of books. My mother read voraciously and still does. She taught me that reading could be fun and exciting and done for its own sake—not for an overtly educational experience. The same was true for writing, and during my father's sermons at church, she would hand me small pieces of paper on which I would draw religious cartoons. Without telling me, she collected all of these religious cartoons in a notebook that I saw only a few years ago. Each week in my father's sermons, he would focus on a specific passage, discussing the language of the passage—at times focusing on a single word in the scripture. While I amused myself with cartoons and playing with Biblical language, my father taught me that language was interpretable, that we should read texts more than once, that words have new meaning at different times in a person's life. Through scripture, I learned to close read, a skill I would not have a name for until my freshman year at Oregon State University (OSU) as an English major. My interest in language and literacy continued to develop in my undergraduate career.

I was first introduced to the term "literacy narratives" when I took Introduction to Literacy Studies, a class that focused on the history of reading and conceptions of literacy up to the present day. Through New Literacy Studies and the work of scholars such as Deborah Brandt, Brian Street, and Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen, I became interested in how we define literacy and the implication of literacy use in

communities. Reading Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives,* we made literacy maps of sponsors, focusing on the people who have been important in our acquisition of literacies. We read literacy narratives like *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color* by Victor Villanueva, *Hunger of Memory* by Richard Rodriguez, and *Hungry Hearts* by Anzia Yzierska and eventually were assigned to write our own literacy narratives. I waited until the night before the assignment was due, unable to figure out what to write, despite having many literacy experiences from which I could draw.

One of my main problems writing a literacy narrative was that my experiences didn't seem to fit with narratives I had read as models. The literacy narrative examples all included issues of class, ethnicity, and struggling to overcome obstacles. My life, in contrast, had been relatively easy and felt uneventful. I had noticed a similar issue when writing a grammar autobiography in my Understanding Grammar class. I understood that many students were writing about adversity—especially with regard to formal education. I, on the other hand, cannot remember a time when I couldn't read. I didn't struggle to understand grammar, and I didn't learn a new language to participate in formal education. I realized then that self-sponsored acts of literacy and religious literacies like my childhood experiences in church are not often represented in narratives used as models, and I wondered what other kinds of literacies go unrepresented but are just as important to students as my own pre-college experiences are to me.

As a graduate student, my understanding of literacy grew as I took courses like Studies in Writing: Self, Society, and Story and Current Composition Theory. While I

studied literacy theory, I also continued working at OSU's writing center and began to teach English Composition. In both teaching and tutoring, I met with students who believed that they were not good writers and that their experiences outside of college would not help them academically. When students wrote personal statements for graduate school, however, or when students in my composition class wrote essays about education, their literacy experiences were diverse and interesting, revealing a great deal about what they valued, how they viewed literacy, and how they arrived at their chosen majors.

My internship with OSU's Writing Intensive Curriculum program in Spring of 2011 was particularly significant for developing my understanding of the importance of writing within students' majors. While attending WIC staff meetings and faculty seminars and collecting data from WIC syllabi, I learned about the many ways that literacy is used across the curriculum and the complications that arise when teaching students the practices involved in researching, writing and communicating as professionals within a discipline. These literacy practices were diverse, but like my own literacy experiences, largely unrepresented in the literacy narratives I'd read in my coursework and research.

Considering my experiences with literacy and my time spent responding to student writing, I felt as though the models I'd seen for literacy narratives were problematic: they focused on a few main themes throughout, were most often narratives of men, and did not seem to encompass the wide-ranging experiences of the students with whom I worked. Most of the models for literacy narratives did not

validate literacies outside of formal education, the locations where many significant literacy practices of students and their communities occur.

This thesis has grown out of my interest in literacy narrative models used within the classroom and the question, "How can we take advantage of the genre of literacy narratives to help students recognize and value their literacy experiences within and outside of formal education?" I argue for a new approach to literacy narratives, locating narrative readings and assignments within courses in the university other than composition, taking advantage of opportunities for students to achieve a broader understanding of literacy and its use in their lives and communities. In particular, I argue for literacy narrative use within the disciplines as students begin to develop professional identities.

In Chapter Two of the thesis, "A Literature Review of Literacy Narrative Research and Pedagogy," I discuss the varying definitions of "literacy" and "literacy narratives" as well as how New Literacy Studies has expanded the definitions of "literacy" and the study of literacy over the past 50 years. This chapter provides an overview of current research on literacy narratives, including discussion of classroom pedagogy and textbook approaches currently used to teach students how to read and write literacy narratives. I also briefly describe three canonical literacy narratives often discussed in scholarship. This chapter provides the groundwork for Chapter Three, "Problematizing the Current Approach to Literacy Narratives and Connecting Literacy Narratives to Diverse University Contexts."

In Chapter Three, I look closely at the three literacy narratives introduced in Chapter Two: *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color* by Victor Villanueva, *Hunger for Memory* by Richard Rodriguez, and *Lives on the Boundary* by Mike Rose. Using these three canonical texts as examples, I problematize the current approach to literacy narratives, discussing the texts' commonly-occurring themes, masculine narratives, and lack of variety in disciplines represented. Though these texts are valuable as readings and models for students, I propose a broader approach to literacy narratives that includes reading literacy narratives with increased variety of themes, inclusion of women and community voices, and examples from across the disciplines. By discussing the connection between writing and identity and the importance of Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses within students' academic careers, I argue for using literacy narratives outside of the composition classroom within three university contexts: first-year seminars, introductory courses to the major, and WID courses.

Chapter Four, "A Pedagogical Framework for Teaching Literacy Narratives and Examples of Literacy Narratives in the Disciplines," expands upon this argument, and I propose a pedagogical framework for teaching literacy narratives within these new contexts. This framework is based upon Mary Hamilton's work in New Literacy Studies and is a focused way of examining significant features of literacy events. To demonstrate the applicability of this framework, I apply it to three literacy narratives, each from a separate discipline: *Wait Till Next Year* by historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Deep Blue Home: An Intimate Ecology of our Wild Ocean* by

scientist/filmmaker Julia Whitty, and *I Want to Be a Mathematician: An Automathography* by mathematician Paul R. Halmos. In applying the framework to these narratives, I demonstrate the usefulness of this tool for teachers, including those who are unfamiliar with literacy studies or the literacy narrative genre. I also describe the rich possibilities for in-class discussions of a single literacy event as well as the potential for students to look critically at their own literacy practices using the framework for guided analysis.

I conclude by discussing the significance of this research on literacy narratives in terms of students developing their identities as professionals, future studies in the disciplines, and faculty development. By recognizing even more opportunities for the use of literacy narratives and paying close attention to the diverse experiences students have with literacy prior to and during their academic careers, I argue we can provide students with the tools they need to think critically about the relationship between literacy and their current goals within and after the university. This development begins with increased discussion of what literacy is, how communities use literacy, and what it means to be literate in contexts within and outside of formal education.

CHAPTER TWO:
A LITERATURE REVIEW OF LITERACY NARRATIVE RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY

Introduction

How people define literacy and what it means to be literate vary greatly, as does how writers portray literacy in narrative form. In this chapter, I first explore varying definitions of "literacy narratives" and the variation in purpose that writers have for composing a literacy narrative. Following that, I review the benefits cited by teachers and scholars of asking students to read and write literacy narratives within the composition classroom, as well as some of the difficulties teachers experience with this genre. I then discuss the ways literacy narratives are taught, give a brief overview of how selected textbooks approach the genre, and identify literacy narratives commonly-assigned as examples of the genre. This chapter provides background information about what literacy narratives are and how they are taught as groundwork for Chapter Three where I problematize the current approach to literacy narratives and argue for teaching literacy narratives in university contexts outside of the composition classroom.

Definitions of Literacy Narratives

Defining "literacy narratives" is a complicated task because definitions of what "literacy" is and what it means to be literate are different based upon social and historical contexts. Prior to World War II, literacy was traditionally thought of as the

ability to read and write. During World War II, according to Sylvia Scribner, literacy was seen a personal set of skills, and the term "functional literacy" came into use to describe "the skills required to meet the task of modern soldiering" (15). After the war, the context for literacy was expanded and “functional literacy" took on the broader meaning that people are familiar with today "as the level of proficiency necessary for effective performance in a range of settings and customary activities" (Scribner 15-16). This “level of proficiency” would mean being able to read and write in settings required to function in society. However, this definition was still problematic, with people disagreeing on what an individual needs to know to function in society. For example, is it necessary for all people to be able to read a newspaper to function in society? Is it necessary to be able to perform a banking transaction? Traditionally, the level of literacy "required" to be viewed as functionally literate has been determined by the government which, understandably, has changed its position many times. In the 1930s, a 4th grade education corresponded with "minimal skills" needed to be considered literate. In the 1940s, this level of education moved up to a 5th grade, and in the 1950s, to 6th grade (Scribner 16-17).

One of the problems with considering literacy in terms of basic skills is the focus on the individual having a set of abilities that can be acquired without further development. Literacy, as it involves meaning-making with others, is a *social* activity that goes well beyond an individual having the ability to read and to write within a set number of contexts. As Scribner points out, "[t]oday's standards for functional

competency need to be considered in light of tomorrow's requirements," as the social and material conditions of literacy continually change (17).

In the past 50 years, New Literacy Studies scholars such as Deborah Brandt, Mary Hamilton, David Barton, and Brian Street have worked towards definitions of "literacy" that go beyond the ability to read and write. This has caused a shift from the singular use of "literacy" to the plural "literacies" that reflects scholars' expanded definition of "literacy," encompassing a variety of literacy practices and contexts. These practices address the needs of communities who create meaning in various ways. Deborah Brandt discusses this shift in view as she situates literacy within historical, social, political, and economic contexts that are always changing:

> Literacy is always in flux. Learning to read and write necessitates an engagement with this flux, with the layers of literacy's past, present, and future, often embodied in materials and tools and just as often embodied in the social relationships we have with the people who are teaching us to read and write…[L]iterate ability has become more and more defined as the ability to position and reposition oneself amidst literacy's recessive and emergent forms. (Brandt "Accumulating" 666)

From Brandt's point of view, literacy is not one or two abilities, but a broad variety of activities that require people to "position and reposition" themselves as the materials, tools, and social spaces associated with literacy shift and accumulate (Brandt "Accumulating" 666). Other scholars describe literacy more generally. J. Blake Scott, in "The Literacy Narrative as Production Pedagogy in the Composition Classroom," defines literacy simply as "social meaning-making through language" (109). Scholars like Brian Street, Shirley Brice Heath, and Sylvia Scribner also point to the social situatedness of literacy, viewing literacy as a practice that goes beyond a set of skills

to how people situate themselves within discourse communities that include older literacy practices and those practices associated with newer literacies that are currently emerging. A literacy narrative, then, is not necessarily a narrative of someone learning how to read or write; a narrative could illustrate any number of social situations wherein the acquisition or use of literacy is an important part of the social situation.

Like literacy, the literacy narrative is also defined by scholars and teachers in a variety of ways. And while literacy narratives have existed for centuries, as with Augustine's *Confessions* and *The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass,* the term "literacy narrative" has only been used since the late 1980s and early 1990s. The differences in definitions of "literacy narrative" are based upon characteristics of the literacy narrative being emphasized. People may define a literacy narrative as containing particular content—such as a story involving formal education or learning a new language. Others may define literacy narratives by the form associated with the genre or by the purpose of the narrative. One of the most basic and widely-used definitions of "literacy narrative" comes from Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen's article "Reading Literacy Narratives." They define literacy narratives as "stories…that foreground issues of language acquisition and literacy" and which "sometimes include explicit images of schooling and teaching; [literacy narratives] include texts that both challenge and affirm culturally scripted ideas about literacy" (Eldred and Mortensen 513). In this way, the texts are defined by what is included in them, not by the author's purpose in writing the text or by a particular narrative form.

Scott, who views “literacy” as “social meaning-making,” defines a "literacy narrative" as "a history or account of a person’s development or accumulation of literacy" (109). In this definition, a historical sense is important as the narrative is situated in a particular time, and literacy is "accumulated" as Brandt would describe it, grounding the narrative in historical and social contexts. Both of these definitions point to the layered process of acquiring literacy—a process which provides rich opportunities for students and scholars to examine and interpret literacy events. Eldred and Mortensen emphasize the value of literacy narratives for readers who can learn about history, society, culture, and language by examining and interpreting literacy practices and events.

Shirley Brice Heath defines "literacy events" as "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes" (93). In *Situated Literacies,* David Barton and Mary Hamilton define these events as "observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them. The notion of events stresses the situated nature of literacy, that it always exists in a social context" (8). They define “literacy practices” as "general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives. In the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy” (Barton and Hamilton 8). Because “what people do with literacy” varies greatly, the narrative form describing literacy practices also varies, including fiction and non-fiction forms..

The most traditional form of the literacy narrative is a written text told as a linear story. In using the term "literacy narrative" rather than "literacy autobiography"

instructors like Scott emphasize that narratives are constructed and that they "blur the fictional and nonfictional elements of their stories" (109). So while writers may construct literacy narratives based on actual events, they may also write fictional literacy narratives. Length of literacy narratives can range from entire books focused on describing an individual's use of literacy to a brief section of a book that presents a single literacy event or practice. Though textual chronological stories are the most common literacy narratives used as examples in classrooms, there are also literacy narratives that include mixed media or that rely heavily upon visual elements to convey meaning. These literacy narratives may include text, images, video, or other visual elements that convey meaning. Literacy narratives that move beyond the exclusive use of text are becoming more widely used by teachers as examples and as possibilities for students conveying meaning within the composition classroom.

The National Council of Teachers of English's summary statement on Multimodal Literacies says that "integration of multiple modes of communication and expression can enhance or transform the meaning of the work beyond illustration or decoration." The NCTE notes:

> The use of multi-modal literacies has expanded the ways we acquire information and understand concepts. Ever since the days of illustrated books and maps[,] texts have included visual elements for the purpose of imparting information. The contemporary difference is the ease with which we can combine words, images, sound, color, animation, video, and styles of print in projects so that they are part of our everyday lives and, at least by our youngest generation, often taken for granted. (NCTE)

Because of this expansion, both professional and student literacy narratives at times move beyond the traditional textual approach, using image, sounds, videos, or other forms that contribute to the narrative's meaning. As the NCTE notes, this is not additional media for the use of "illustration or decoration," but an opportunity for students to represent literacy in ways that are meaningful to them and that can be experienced in multiple ways by the audience.

Examples of using multimodal literacies to create literacy narratives include movies like *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *Malcolm X*, and *The Color Purple*; or graphic novels and memoirs such as *Fun Home: A Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel, *Epileptic* by Daniel B., and *Blankets* by Craig Thompson. The author's choice of medium changes how the story is received and interpreted by the audience, and these choices are as important as the textual ones made in the traditional literacy narrative form. Regardless of the form that the literacy narrative takes, however, the key feature of literacy narratives is their focus on literacy events and practices and the importance of these practices.

The Purpose of Published Literacy Narratives

Literacy narratives written by published authors serve a variety of purposes. When viewed from an anthropological standpoint, literacy narratives demonstrate how literacy differs in social contexts, both oral and textual (Daniell 398). From a political standpoint, literacy narratives can act as "a tool for liberating people from political and economic oppression," as with Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Daniell

399). Authors may write literacy narratives with the express purpose of making a group of people's literacy practices more familiar to a larger audience, as with Shirley Brice Heath's ethnographic study *Ways with Words*. Authors may also write literacy narratives to make their own experiences available to others, as with autobiographies that, while personal stories, also are public works that comment on social, political, and personal situations that involve literacy. The variety of purposes that can be accomplished through writing a literacy narrative, combined with the rich possibilities for story-telling and conveying meaning make reading and writing literacy narratives compelling assignments within the composition classroom.

The Purpose of Literacy Narratives in the Composition Classroom

Currently, reading and writing literacy narratives are assignments found primarily within college composition classrooms. Though other classes such as literacy studies or courses on autobiographical writing may have similar assignments, the composition classroom is the main site of ongoing discussions about literacy and its effects on students—particularly first-year students in the university.

Literacy narratives written by students in the composition classroom usually contain many of the same features as those written by professional authors: literacy practices and events shown in context and the narrative of these events pointing to the significance of literacy in the characters' lives. The classroom purpose behind writing a literacy narrative is different, however, as the student writer deals with an unfamiliar genre with the added goal of completing an assignment which may be graded based

upon criteria established by the teacher. Students usually do not write ethnographic accounts like Heath's or liberation narratives like Freier's, but instead write about their personal experiences acquiring and using literacy—experiences that usually occur within formal education settings.

In "Translating Self and Difference," Mary Soliday describes one purpose of literacy narratives in the classroom as "self-translation": "literacy stories…focus upon those moments when the self is on the threshold of possible intellectual, social, and emotional development; literacy narratives become sites of self-translation where writers can articulate the meanings and the consequences of their passages between language worlds" (512). In "Literacy Narratives as Genres of Possibility," Susan DeRosa describes the purpose of literacy narratives within her classroom as a way of "provid[ing] writers with a lens through which they may examine their literacy experiences as critical acts of inquiry" (3). In both of these cases, the purpose of writing literacy narratives is focused on the benefits for the individual writing the narrative, not for their audience. The literacy narrative assignment encourages students to "examine" their own experiences—to reflect critically on how literacy has shaped their identities and communities.

Literacy narratives written for composition courses are usually shorter pieces focused on a single experience or event that has influenced the student. My own definition for literacy narratives as presented to students in a classroom might be "a story that reflects upon literacy within a specific context and that demonstrates critical thinking about the impact of literacy on the writer's life." With the purpose of

literacy narratives in the classroom being active reflection, critical thinking, and construction of a meaningful narrative, teachers associate a number of benefits with this assignment.

Perceived Benefits of Literacy Narratives in the Classroom

As noted earlier, literacy narratives are primarily assigned within the composition classroom. As composition is a course taken by most first-year students, this setting corresponds with the need for students to acquaint themselves with the similarities and differences between previous literacy experiences and those of the university. The composition classroom provides a space for reflection on differing literacy contexts.

Scholarship and teacher testimony predominately focus on the perceived benefits of literacy narratives rather than on difficulties associated with the genre. The main benefits discussed by scholars are students 1) reflecting upon their literacy practices in context; 2) making conscious choices about how to represent themselves and their identities; 3) gaining increased agency as writers and university students; and 4) acquiring a broader view of what counts as literacy and how literacy varies between people and communities. While these are by no means the only benefits of literacy narratives, they are commonly cited by teachers and scholars.

The first benefit, self-reflection, is asserted by many teachers. Literacy narratives involve more than just remembering the past; students must actively consider events and interpret the meaning of those events. Students read literacy

narratives written by others and ask questions like "What is literacy in this context? How does the writer represent literacy in the narrative? How does the writer's literacy practices shape their identity and their relationships with others?" Reading literacy narratives provides students with models to question prior to applying the same questions to their own experiences and constructing their own narratives based upon their reflection.

Mary Soliday describes her views of a strong literacy narrative:

> An author of a successful literacy story goes beyond recounting 'what happened' to foreground the distance between an earlier and a present self conscious of living in time…To develop this dynamic sense of the autobiographical self, successful narrators acknowledge that their life stories can be composed or deliberately constructed renderings of experience. (514)

This reflection helps students to see how their identities have changed over time and how literacy has been an integral part of this development. This type of reflection leads to the second benefit of constructing and representing an identity within a literacy narrative.

DeRosa describes her objectives for students writing literacy narrative, emphasizing the importance of representation:

> By writing self-reflectively about their literacy practices in narratives, students may: 1) identify and reflect on their roles and responsibilities as writers—a sense of ethos; 2) develop understanding of their literacy in flux and a sense of agency as writers; and 3) develop awareness of their "literacy in action"—the ways that their writing can effect change in their communities—a sense of civic literacy. (2)

DeRosa's objectives are closely aligned with Brandt's sense of literacy as something that is always in flux, changing in ways that require students to "reposition"

themselves in context. DeRosa's third point highlights the social nature of literacy and a belief that students can necessarily gain empowerment and further change in their own communities through the act of writing. These views are particularly cognizant of the writer as a citizen—a person who is responsible for themselves as well as for contributing in some way to the betterment of their communities. DeRosa encourages students to consider their identities as citizens and active community members as they read and write literacy narratives. This association of writing literacy narratives with increased understanding of self and of community is echoed by a variety of scholars.

Soliday, a strong supporter of literacy narratives, argues that by writing literacy narratives, students "discover that their own stories are narratable" and that "they can engage in broader critical dialogue with each other and with well-known texts such as Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*" (512). Two of the primary goals of literacy narratives for Soliday, are 1) helping students understand and express how moving between linguistic communities has shaped them, and 2) teaching students to dialogue about representations of difference within narratives (512). Both Soliday and DeRosa focus on students as individuals who can develop a strong sense of themselves and their communities. This sense of identity then leads to representations of that identity within texts. Some scholars argue further that actively considering identity and how to represent it can lead to students conceiving of themselves as participating members of the university.

The third benefit, increased agency as writers and as university students, teachers argue, results from increased awareness of identity with regard to literacy and

conscious choices being made by students about how to represent their identities and those of their linguistic communities. In "Literacy Narratives and Confidence Building in the Writing Classroom," Caleb Corkery describes how reading and writing literacy narratives build student confidence as writers in an academic setting. Corkery argues that writing "literacy narratives can offer students a chance to adjust their self-images to place themselves comfortably within their new academic community" (50). Part of this adjustment may come from students' recognizing literacy practices that occur outside of the university and how those practices inform their understanding of the new education setting.

Generating ideas for writing literacy narratives provides students with a chance to discuss important moments in their lives that have led to their identities as writers and as university students. Corkery notes that students reading a variety of literacy narratives contributes to this particular benefit as "students from communities that traditionally have not had access to higher education are liable to benefit the most from a genre that presents non-traditional paths to schooled literacy" (51). As students see these varying paths to academic literacies represented in the literacy narratives that they read, students can then consider their own path that has led to academia and their current identity.

Through critically examining their previous literacy experiences and writing about them, students can recognize that though new university-specific literacy practices must be acquired, their previous and ongoing literacy practices inform that acquisition and are not only important, but integral parts of their identities as writers,

students, and community members. DeRosa makes a similar argument to that of Corkery about students' identities and agency as writers:

> In literacy narratives, writers may be self-reflective and critical of their roles and responsibilities as writers, their writing strategies, and their interactions with generic forms, as they (re)position themselves in the discourses of different genres. Finally, as writers develop a sense of narrative agency by writing literacy narratives, they become participants in the development of their literacy in action. Potentially, as critical agents, writers may be encouraged to write their voices into communities beyond classrooms, and write their ideas into action. (3)

DeRosa's view is of literacy narratives providing agency that extends beyond the classroom into students' communities—as the voices students develop through writing literacy narratives move on to assert action in other literacy contexts (DeRosa 3). To this end, the literacy narratives written by students may contain discussion of formal education, but they also may discuss the importance of literacy practices that students have brought with them to the university and that they will carry with them into other contexts. By reading published and student-written literacy narratives that illustrate the variety of contexts in which literacy occurs, students can better understand literacy as a complex concept that is not limited to reading and writing.

This fourth benefit, a broader view of literacy, is described by Scott who argues that

> [b]y excavating and writing about a variety of literacy experiences, including everyday language acts they might normally overlook or dismiss as trivial or having nothing to do with 'real' writing, students sometimes expand their definitions of literacy and writing, and thus their definitions of themselves as writers. (112)

This understanding of literacy that exists in every day life—not just within formal education—can contribute to that sense of agency that students have as students and writers who are literate in a variety of contexts.

DeRosa describes this new understanding, asserting that, through reading literacy narratives,

> [students] question previous ways of thinking about their literacy as a static event, or 'a time when I became literate.' Instead, students develop an awareness of their 'literacies' in flux, literacy as knowledge-making practices, and literacy linked to change in their lives and their communities. (3)

By thinking of literacy as an ongoing practice rather than a single moment or event, students can start to position themselves in their particular moment as university students and writers who have a variety of literacy practices that tie them to multiple communities. As DeRosa points out, as students' lives and communities change, so to do their literacy practices. The awareness that develops through writing their own literacy narratives can help students become much more flexible in how they approach acquiring new literacies and using them within specific discourse communities.

These four main benefits are described by many scholars and teachers who have used literacy narratives in the classroom and found them to be effective in helping students think critically about literacy and its effects. As with any assignment, though, there are also difficulties teaching literacy narratives and complications that can arise when students read literacy narratives and craft their own narratives.

Difficulties with Literacy Narratives in the Classroom

In current research, there are far fewer discussions of difficulties when teaching literacy narratives than there are perceived benefits. The difficulties are important, however, as discussing any difficulties associated with teaching literacy narratives can help teachers develop stronger pedagogical practices for teaching this genre. The lack of scholarly discussion about difficulties teaching literacy narratives indicates the need for a more complete theoretical view of literacy narrative pedagogy. Two main difficulties that arise when teaching literacy narratives are how difference is represented within texts and how students relate, or don't relate, to the narratives they are reading and emulating.

Teachers assert that one of the benefits of reading literacy narratives is that students become acquainted with differences in literacy practices of a variety of communities and cultures. The representations of these differences in the classroom can pose difficulties for teachers because they must help students understand differences without endorsing stereotypical views that do not create a full understanding of the significance of the differences in literacy practices. Mary Soliday notes,

> [i]t is surely true that educators have often failed to acknowledge difference in the classroom, even when students directly address issue of class or gender in their writing (Brodkey); yet we should not let our zeal to recognize historically repressed differences create a polarizing rhetoric of difference that turns on a reductive view of culture. (522)

A reductive view of culture would assert that all members of a specific culture use literacy in the same way, or that literacies are not complex and shaped by a variety of factors.

Because model literacy narratives are chosen to highlight difference in an attempt to create dialogue between students and to help them understand the contextual nature of literacy, teachers have to be careful how they discuss ideas from students and from model texts. If, as Soliday points out, the classroom takes on a "reductive view of culture," then part of the benefit of the literacy narrative is lost, considering that one of the goals in discussing literacy narratives is to highlight the complexity of culture and literacy, acknowledging the myriad of factors that influence how literacy affects students' identities and membership in communities (522).

Corkery contributes his own concerns about representations of difference to the scholarly conversation. However, he highlights the issue of how students connect with narratives presented in classrooms. Corkery writes that "[o]ne of the problems inherent in using literacy narratives is the lack of identification offered to students who see themselves as not fitting into the expectations of classroom English" (58). The most common literacy narratives used as models illustrate successful assimilation of a student into the university. Many of the models provided are of writers who go on to become successful authors in their own fields and who write from a point of privilege which Corkery argues some students may find more "off-putting than comforting" (58). Imagining themselves as successful writers within the university can be particularly hard for students—especially those struggling to take on the linguistic

characteristics of an academic discourse community. When reading narratives of professionals, students may not see themselves within the narratives or be able to conceive of themselves arriving at the same point as the published authors whose writing is clear, polished, and clearly influential to scholars.

David Bartholomae reminds readers in "Inventing the University," students often must speak from a place of privilege that they do not have or feel when writing:

> [S]ince students assume privilege by locating themselves within the discourse of a particular community—within a set of specifically acceptable gestures and commonplaces—learning, at least as it is defined in the liberal arts curriculum, becomes more a matter of imitation or parody than a matter of invention and discovery." (67)

Like Soliday and DeRosa, it is clear that Bartholomae hopes students will come to a point where they assert their own discoveries and identities that they develop as academic writers. This development is complicated by the issue of privilege and students not always feeling they have the privilege or knowledge to write as a member of the university.

As noted before, students often read literacy narratives written by published authors who have successfully reached a place of privilege within the university and who are speaking from a vantage point of a former outsider who has gained insider status. In addition to this status, these authors demonstrate exceptional abilities at navigating difficult transitions between discourses. Though the authors may clearly point to how difficult these transitions were for them, students may still find the idea of positioning themselves within the university a daunting task that is not fully represented within writing from such a privileged point of view. While the use of

student-written literacy narratives may mitigate this issue to some degree, the student-written narratives are also viewed as strong models. If a student is to follow these models, he or she must still find a place of privilege to write from when constructing their literacy narrative. This place of privilege differs depending upon the students' personal interests, abilities, and backgrounds; and some students may see the published literacy narratives, and even narratives of other students, as representing lofty or unattainable goals.

Soliday writes,

> At their best, literacy narratives provide a space where students…can defamiliarize their ordinary language use and perform imaginative acts of self-representation in order, as Eva Hoffaman puts it, to translate '[b]etween the two stories and two vocabularies' 'without being split by the difference' (269, 274). (522)

While this goal is certainly admirable and desirable, how teachers can effectively help students to perform these imaginative acts often goes unaddressed. Teachers would benefit from more scholarship that discusses how to overcome issues of representation and writer-audience connection for students trying to locate their own experiences within the models they read.

Though literacy narratives can be "genres of possibility," as DeRosa and Soliday assert, a thorough discussion of pedagogy for teaching literacy narratives is currently lacking or in a nascent form. A productive starting point for establishing pedagogy for literacy narratives could be to theorize this genre and consider skills, questions, and strategies that might be effective in helping students to succeed when writing about literacy events that are both personal experiences and public interaction.

Pedagogical Practices for Writing and Sharing Literacy Narratives

One striking issue of literacy narrative pedagogy is that while scholars argue the benefits of teaching literacy narratives, there is not nearly as much scholarship on how the actual teaching of literacy narratives occurs within the classroom. The theory supporting the narrative itself exists, while a theoretical model for teaching literacy narratives is not developed. The work of New Literacy Studies scholars like Deborah Brandt, Ellen Cushman, Mary Hamilton, and David Barton can serve as a means to developing this pedagogy, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Four. The current scholarship surrounding literacy narratives, however, does point to a few common strategies teachers share for discussing and writing literacy narratives.

Scott uses " process-based strategies in teaching the invention of literacy narratives: 1) [He] engage[s] students in a series of collaborative exercises and 2) [He] encourage[s] students to develop their own approaches and focuses" (109). Scott's emphasis on construction of literacy narratives includes a number of activities that help writers to generate content. For example, students may make a literacy timeline with literacy events that are particularly important. Teachers may have students bring in "literacy artifacts" that remind them of literacy events and contexts. Discussions between peers may trigger memories of literacy events that were important to students but forgotten (Scott 108-110).

During the drafting process, peer review can help students consider their experiences in more depth by responding to questions and suggestions from their peers. Sharing these narratives or compiling a book of the class's literacy narratives

can be a way of enhancing community and a shared sense of the value of reading, discussing, and learning about the literacy experiences of others. Sharing literacy narratives provides students with a way to learn about their peers as well as a way for teachers to learn about their students as individuals and as community members.

Since literacy narratives deal with issues that are extremely personal, teachers must be aware of how literacy practices that often occur in public settings are also private experiences. Many students have had negative experiences with literacy in formal education; in-class discussion of these experiences may help students to make sense of these events and understand how these experiences have affected their identities as students and writers. For example, DeRosa describes how many students come into class having been affected by the focus on standardized testing and achievement in schools, noting that "students use the language of assessment and ranking to identify their abilities as writers in a university environment, thus the labeling continues" (1). When students label themselves as "good" or "bad" writers or "C students," they rely upon a reductive language imposed upon them in previous educational experiences—a language that does not accurately reflect the many literacy experiences and abilities students bring to the university (DeRosa 1). Classroom discussions that interrogate this kind of language and provide students with a different framework for considering literacy can be invaluable prior to students beginning to write about literacy experiences, whether positive or negative.

Though some students may be comfortable writing about negative experiences or about overcoming obstacles, even those who feel self-identify as strong writers or

who have had primarily positive experiences may find "the persona of the newly arrived literate" uncomfortable because it puts the student in a position of someone who previously was not literate or who was an outsider to the discourse community (Corkery 58). In published examples of literacy narratives, the writers usually describe how they arrived at their insider point of view—a point of view that students who still feel like outsiders may struggle to depict. In reality, students early on in their academic careers do not have an insider point of view in relation to the university and its literacy practices. Because of this, the generative and collaborative exercises that Scott advises can help students identify contexts within and outside of the university in which they *are* insiders or where they have used literacy in interesting or impactful ways that they hadn't fully considered before. Exercises like this broaden students' views of literacy, encouraging them to consider multiple literacy contexts and practices while also helping them achieve comfort with the idea of being an expert in some discourses while a novice in others. With the help of their peers and collaborative exercises, students can generate a variety of topics that would be possibilities for the content of their own narratives.

After students generate content, teachers are faced with the task of helping students craft a literacy narrative that is effective and communicates what the students view as important about their literacy experiences. Only recently have textbooks begun to include literacy narratives and approaches to reading and writing them. Similarly to scholars like Scott, textbooks typically emphasize the constructed nature of the literacy narrative, guiding students through examples that demonstrate common

structures, thematic elements, and approaches to using personal experience as a way of foregrounding societal issues. The most common approach to helping students understand narrative options is using models as guides, though many scholars recognize the dangers associated with relying solely upon published examples or solely on student examples.

Corkery notes that published examples may distance students who feel that these examples, regardless of the struggles they describe, represent "an unattainable, monolithic school standard" (60). In addition, these examples may position readers as simply consumers. Scott describes the effects of the focus on published narratives:

> The current emphasis on the reading and interpretation of published, 'professional' literacy narratives is partly conservative in that it stabilizes the ideas and stories of a few select authors, conserving and preserving their versions of literacy and literacy development. (114)

In preserving these versions, students may not produce new stories or new forms, but rather imitate other writers' views of literacy.

On the other hand, even mixing student narratives with canonized ones, as Soliday does, may in some ways "idealize narratives as acts of student resistance" (Scott 114). That is, the writers' common depictions of literacy in terms of conflict, overcoming obstacles, and challenging others may contribute to students feeling that literacy narratives are primarily a way of "challeng[ing] dominant ideologies of 'cultural literacy'" (Scott 114). In reality, literacy narratives have a number of purposes. Students can certainly challenge dominant ideologies, resist others' representations of themselves, or take issue with power structures that reinforce

oppressive practices. However, with the current focus on published and idealized narratives of resistance, students may be more likely to reproduce these kinds of narratives in their own writing.

Literacy is experienced in a variety of ways, at times without significant power struggles or transformative results. Because many literacy narratives presented in classes focus on issues of power and a complete transformation of self, students may not develop strategies for representing literacy in ways that differ from these common methods. Textbooks may include narratives written by well-known authors as well as student narratives in order to provide a variety of experiences and voices. However, regardless of whether the student narratives come from textbooks or are distributed in class, students may necessarily view these narratives as sanctioned and indicative of the type of narrative desired by the instructor. Because students need models to get a sense of what a literacy narrative is and how to approach writing one, the question of which literacy narratives to read and use as models is important to consider. Models help construct the rhetorical choices students believe available to them when completing the literacy narrative assignment. A teacher's promotion of a few recognized models may produce a plethora of student narratives within the classroom with similar structures, interpretations of events, and types of literacy discussed. These models and rhetorical strategies may come from textbooks assigned for the course or from outside readings chosen by the teacher.

Textbook Approaches to Literacy Narratives

By describing five composition textbooks, I will provide a brief look at some current approaches to teaching students about literacy narratives. While this is not a random sampling of textbooks or representative of all textbooks currently in use, this selection does provide a sense of how literacy narratives are situated, described, and explained in textbooks. Though I tried to find a list of the most-commonly used composition textbooks in higher education, this was made difficult by the fact that publishers do not make information on sales available to the public. In addition, many textbooks currently used in composition may not include literacy narratives. The selected textbooks represent some recently-published texts that do include discussion of literacy narratives examples and assignments. Table 1. Literacy Narrative Instruction in Textbooks, at the end of this section, shows basic information about five composition textbooks: *How to Write Anything* (2010), *The Norton Field Guide to Writing* (2010), *Writing Today* (2010), *Joining the Conversation: College Writing and Beyond* (2010), and *Writing About Writing* (2011).

Four out of five of the textbooks situate literacy narratives within a larger genre such as "narratives," "memoirs," or "reflective writing." To these textbooks, literacy narratives are not a genre in and of themselves, but rather a sub- or micro-genre. *The Norton Field Guide to Writing* is the only textbook in the selection that lists the literacy narrative as its own genre. In *Writing About Writing*, Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs situated literacy narratives within a section that discusses literacies rather than just literacy, positioning the literacy narrative as an assignment given to

help students consider their literacy practices. Positioned with other similar assignments like autoethnography, in *Writing About Writing,* literacy narratives might be considered part of a genre of literacy writing. It is clear that there is no one standard approach to literacy narratives, as each textbook uses the literacy narrative in its own way—one to highlight reflective writing, one to highlight issues of literacy, and others to highlight a basic narrative form.

Though the literacy narrative may serve a number of different purposes within the textbooks, the definitions provided for "literacy narrative" demonstrate a few common conceptions about what constitutes a literacy narrative. All five textbooks, for instance, use "reading" and "writing" or "reader" and "writer" within their definitions, using the most common definition of "literacy." Two textbooks go beyond "reading" and "writing." In *How to Write Anything,* John J. Ruszkiewicz and Jay Dolmage add "acquir[ing] an intellectual skill or ability" to their definition (20). In *Writing about Writing,* students get a sense of an expanded way of viewing literacy through a section on literacies that include readings from a variety of New Literacy Studies scholars like Deborah Brandt and Shirley Brice Heath. Though the definition of "literacy narrative" is brief, the introductory readings about literacy add to students' understandings of literacy as a social practice with varying definitions.

After the readings in the selected textbooks, authors often include a brief literacy narrative assignment. These assignments usually list or describe features of literacy narratives. The chart at the end of this section shows the range of features pointed to as elements of effective narrative. All of the textbooks include two

common features of literacy narratives: significance of the story and use of details in the narrative. Though significance of the literacy narrative is termed in a variety of ways, such as “new understanding,” or “makes some overall point,” it is clear that the authors of these textbooks believe that literacy narratives should convey a meaningful message that establishes the significance of the story for readers (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 38, Wardle and Downs 460). Some of the textbooks discuss literacy narratives in depth, with explanations of purpose, annotated example narratives, and questions for students to generate content for their own literacy narratives (Bullock and Goggin 20-37, Wardle and Down 328-462). Other textbooks feature only a brief paragraph or two about literacy narratives, connecting the genre to the narrative form in general and listing common narrative elements like plot, scene, or details (Palmquist 121-124, Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 48-50, Ruszkiewicz and Dolmage 20-23). All of the textbooks included features of the literacy narrative as well as at least one example narrative.

Literacy narratives used as examples for students vary in the five textbooks, though all five textbooks feature narratives of professionals. Two of the five textbooks also include student narratives. This does not necessarily mean that these are the only narratives used as examples in classrooms where teachers assign literacy narratives. Teachers may assign outside readings of literacy narratives written by professionals or by past students. The textbooks in the selection, however, focus on professional literacy narratives that correspond with the main features the textbook lists as important for the genre. If teachers were to rely solely on this selection of

textbooks for examples, students would be provided primarily with literacy narratives written not just by professionals, but by professional writers. This could lead to the difficulty Corkery describes where students view polished, professional examples as representative of "an unattainable, monolithic school standard" (60). Without diverse narratives from students and professionals from a variety of disciplines, students may find it difficult to identify with two or three examples given in a textbooks—especially if all of the examples come from professional writers. In addition, many of the common themes associated with literacy narratives may be seen as the only narrative options available for students writing their own literacy narratives.

This selection of textbooks focuses upon professional narratives and a few key features—narrative significance and details to set the stage for the story and to provide readers with compelling descriptions of literacy events. Because textbooks can provide only a few examples, there is no way that they can adequately represent all fields, literacy practices, or purposes associated with literacy narratives. However, scholarly articles about teaching literacy narratives in the composition classroom indicate that there are a number of commonly-assigned literacy narrative examples that are forming a canon within composition. I will provide a brief overview of these narratives in the next section.

Table 1 Literacy Narrative Instruction in Textbooks

Textbook	Author(s)	Publisher And Year	Section in the Textbook	Definition of "literacy narrative"	Features of Literacy Narratives (original language from text)	Examples
How to Write Anything	John J. Ruszkiewicz and Jay Dolmage	Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2010	Narrative	"[A literacy narrative] typically narrates the processes by which a person learns to read or write or acquires an intellectual skill or ability" (20).	-Sets the scene -Details give experience impact -Conflict -Examination (20-23)	Professional -Richard Rodriguez, author
The Norton Field Guide to Writing	Richard Bullock and Maureen Daly Goggin	W.W. Norton and Company, 2010	Genres: Writing a Literacy Narrative	"Writing students are often called upon to compose literacy narratives to explore their experiences with reading and writing" (21).	-Well-told story -Vivid detail -Indication of the narrative's significance (28)	Student Professional -Amy Tan, author -Marjorie Agosin, professor -Tanya Barrientos, columnist -Malcolm X, activist -Alison Bechdel, author -Marina Nemat, author
Writing Today	Richard Johnson-Sheehan and Charles Paine	Pearson Education, Inc., 2010	Memoirs	"The literacy narrative is a kind of memoir that focuses on how the author learned to read and write or on some formative experience that involves writing and speaking" (48).	-Engaging title -Introduction -Complication -Plot -Intimacy between narrator and reader -Rich and vivid details -Central theme or question -New understanding or revelation (38)	Professional -Frederick Douglass, writer -Wang Ping, author
Joining the Conversation: Writing in College and Beyond	Mike Palmquist	Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2010	Reflective Writing	"Literacy narratives allow writers to reflect on the people, ideas, and events that have shaped them as writers and readers" (121).	-Writer shares reflection about their relationship with reading and writing -Details to support point (121)	Professional -Tayari Jones, novelist
Writing About Writing	Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs	Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2011	Literacies	"Autoethnography" - "examin[ing] yourself and your own writing processes" (322). "Literacy narrative"- "examin[ing] your history as a reader and writer" (458)	-Tells story or stories about your literacy history -Talks about where you are now as a writer and reader and how your past has shaped your present -Makes some overall point (460)	Student Professional -Sherman Alexie, author -Shirley Brice Heath, scholar -Malcolm X, activist

Commonly-Assigned Literacy Narrative Readings

While the scope of what constitutes a literacy narrative is fairly open considering the broad definitions of "literacy," composition scholarship focuses on some of the same literacy narratives as readings for research and for classroom use. These include *Hunger for Memory*: *The Education of Richard Rodriguez* by Richard Rodriguez, *Lives on the Boundary* by Mike Rose, and *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color* by Victor Villanueva, Jr. These texts frequently appear within scholarship that discusses literacy narratives and teaching experiences, and a canon that includes these narratives is emerging in first year writing. Though these texts are often discussed in scholarship, only Rodriguez's narrative was included in the sample of textbooks I looked at. If assigned readings in the classroom reflect the focus of scholarship on literacy narratives, students gain a limited sense of experiences that constitute literacy as well as the context of those experiences. In addition, this canon brings a few voices to the forefront of literacy discussions, when students can benefit from a wider variety of voices, both male and female, and from a range of discourse communities. These canonical texts, while chosen as strong examples that represents the literacy narrative genre, can reinforce notions of what literacy is and who has the right to speak about literacy. Teachers can provide students with a broader view of literacy and more ground for discussion by using a variety of voices that represent literacy in ways that differ from the canonical approach.

Hunger for Memory is by far the most routinely mentioned literacy narrative within scholarship, possibly indicating that this text epitomizes what many scholars

believe a literacy narrative should be and accomplish. The chapter "Aria" in particular is considered a prime example of the genre. In *Hunger for Memory,* Richard Rodriguez, a child of Mexican immigrants, describes acquiring English as a second language and, in doing so, becoming distant from his familial relationships and from his home language. Prior to learning English, Rodriguez describes his "a childhood of intense family closeness. And extreme public alienation" (3). This childhood contrasts with his perspective "[t]hirty years later…as a middle-class American man. Assimilated" and sought as a speaker for conventions and seminars about modern and minority education (Rodriguez 3-4). Prior to beginning his narrative, Rodriguez is clear that his is a story of "gains and losses" that have come as a result of life-altering education (4-5). He does not assert that his story is one that is indicative of all students or even a large portion of students, but rather that his story challenges many of the assumptions people have about literacy, class mobility, and connections between past and present. His story points to the benefits and the drawbacks of education that changes how an individual perceives himself and his family. Speaking from a position of having "made it" as an author and speaker, Rodriguez draws attention to the issues that he still faces within public and private realms.

Victor Villanueva makes a similar move in his mixed-genre book *Bootstraps: from an American Academic of Color.* His book is written in multiple genres and with different voices as it was written out of a desire to show "the struggles of people of color continue *after* goals are reached, after 'making it'" (Villanueva vii). Villanueva's story is unique in that his "is an autobiography with political, theoretical, pedagogical

considerations" (xviii). He speaks both as a young man learning English and navigating the public school system and as a published author and a respected professor. Like Rodriguez, he speaks from a position within education, a perspective removed from his initial beginnings. The changes in perspective throughout his narrative highlight the difficulties experienced by immigrant and minority students. Villanueva writes,

> I will always be somehow an outlander…[who] often feel[s] alone professionally. But…just as often feel[s] a member of a professional community—a community that extends beyond the university that employs [him], a community that includes all English-language teachers. (xv)

In taking on multiple perspectives from different periods of his life, Villanueva's narrative is one that is rich in possibilities for connections with readers who are at varying stages in their education or professional careers. Like Rodriguez, however, Villanueva highlights both the benefits of his inclusion in particular communities as well as the sense of loss or of alienation from communities, even after having reached a point of privilege.

Another compositionist, Mike Rose, tells his literacy narrative in *Lives on the Boundaries.* Rose's story focuses on class and his struggles to achieve within public schooling, first as a young man mistakenly placed in remedial courses and then as a college student working to become comfortable with English as a discourse community. Like Villanueva and Rodriguez, Rose discusses both public and private locations of engagement with literacy, combining "vignette and commentary, reflection and analysis" to help readers understand the struggles faced by students who

are "deemed remedial or underprepared [for]…educational life" (xi-xii). Like Villanueva, Rose speaks as an instructor and compositionist, someone who hopes to provide students, especially those who are in the same position that he was, with an education that is more democratic than the current system of benchmarks and evaluation that overlooks "abilities hidden by class and cultural barriers" (xi).

These three literacy narratives share a number of common themes that are significant when considering what teachers appear to value in literacy narratives and why they would wish to encourage dialogue with these works. For example, Mary Soliday notes that it is her hope that students, through writing literacy narratives, will be able to "engage in broader critical dialogue with each other and with well-known texts such as Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*" (512). In "Composing One's Self Through the Narratives of Others," Stuart Greene described a composition class that for four weeks studied literacy narratives:

> [Students] shared literacy autobiographies in writing groups, read Richard Rodriguez's (1982) *Hunger for Memory* by Mike Rose's (1989) *Lives on the Boundaries* and began to formulate their own theories about what constitutes literate practice, critically examining those conditions with both foster and impede the development of literacy. (2)

Students are often encouraged to read these literacy narratives and respond to or interact with the texts in terms of their own literacy experiences. All three narratives address 1) what constitutes literacy in context; 2) conditions that impede or encourage literacy development; and 3) obstacles that are overcome to achieve success.

Greene points out that one of the common themes addressed in literacy narratives is the issue of "what constitutes literate practice" (2). As the definitions of literacy from earlier suggest, this question is not easy or simple. In *Hunger for Memory*, for example, Rodriguez addresses the issue of public and private spaces and how to him, English was the public language of the classroom and considered the language of literacy while his home language of Spanish was a language of privacy that in certain contexts made him seem illiterate (25, 30-31). Villanueva also highlights this issue of what constitutes literacy and does so in multiple contexts, paying particular attention to the classroom.

Villanueva discusses the issues faced by bilingual students who have "relativistic notion[s] of language" (23). To a bilingual student, "words [do not have] fixed meanings that are not arbitrary" (22-23). Instead, there are always issues of translation, of word connotation and nuance, and of context when using language. Testing situations, in particular, drive home this concept, as words on standardized tests are generally viewed as static in meaning, and bilingual students may not be considered literate in that context if they are not capable of determining the meaning of the words as prescribed by those who make the tests. Villanueva notes the contextual nature of literacy and the struggles endured by students who have a “relativistic notion of language” (23).

In addition to this deceptively-basic question of "what constitutes literacy" is another common question—what are "the conditions that foster or impede development of literacy?" (Greene 2). All three of these authors consider this question

in great depth, especially Rose and Villanueva who address the issue of literacy from positions as students and professors. These conditions include, but are not limited to, factors such as education level; resources; class; culture; and gatekeeping practices. Mike Rose is particularly vocal about the conditions that impeded his own acquisition of academic literacies when he describes being mistakenly placed in Vocational Education "aimed at increasing the economic opportunities of students who do not do well in our schools" (26). "A dumping ground for the disaffected," this classroom showed Rose firsthand the ways that students could easily become alienated from education (Rose 26). As a college student, Rose felt entirely unprepared after only a year of intensive study with an English teacher who supported his college goals. Not considering using office hours because of aloof and distant professors and concerns about his own inadequacy, Rose "oscillated between the false potency of scorn and feelings of ineptitude," conditions that did not aid him in understanding the new discourses and requirements of the university (43-45).

Rodriguez also points to the academic conditions that pushed him to become a public figure and writer. However, he also addresses private conditions that went beyond his self-perception to his relationships with family. Because his parents were determined that he receive a good education, they would ask him to speak English at home and, as the "children [in the family] learned more and more English, [they] shared fewer and fewer words with [their] parents" whose primary language was Spanish (Rodriguez 23). Though the conditions Rodriguez experienced worked well as a transition into an English-speaking world of education and public life, Rodriguez

notes that he "suffer[ed] a diminished sense of *private* individuality by becoming assimilated into public society" (26). Though Rodriguez seems to see this transition as a necessary evil, his objections to these conditions are evident in that he did not understand that "intimacy is not created by a particular language; it is created by intimates;" and while he changed linguistically, it was the social changes that fueled his transition as most of his time was spent in public spheres using English (32). This transition may not have been as painful had these conditions been recognized and discussed in ways that acknowledged the multiple identities he had and how the context and conditions of literacy acquisition affected those identities.

Though all three authors of these widely-read literacy narratives challenge in some ways the literacy myth, "the easy and unfounded assumption that better literacy necessarily leads to economic development, cultural progress, and individual improvement," they also reinforce this myth to some degrees with the understandable acknowledgement of the improvements that come with acquiring specific forms of literacy, particularly those of public spheres (Eldred & Mortensen 512). These three canonical texts have a common element of literacy narratives: a hero overcoming adversity and experiencing positive results. All three writers are published authors, two of whom are professors within universities and who are acknowledged for their contributions to the field of rhetoric and composition. In general, these hero narratives are positive ones where challenges are acknowledged, faced, and overcome.

As initial challenges are overcome in the narratives, new ones arise. Villanueva notes his struggles as an academic of color who often feels alone professionally. Rodriguez describes his changed relationships with his family and his ongoing issues with critics who he believes "romanticize public separateness and…trivialize the dilemma of the socially disadvantaged" by asserting that avoiding assimilation is the only way to own one's heritage (27). Rose still sees the same issues he dealt with in high school reflected in the current public school system as students enter college underprepared and without the necessary support that would help them avoid feelings of inadequacy (xi).

These narratives are filled with adversity, often adversity relating to race, ethnicity or class. Many literacy narratives, both well known and lesser-known, such as *Lost in Translation* by Eva Hoffman, *The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass,* or *Hungry Hearts* by Anzia Yzierska, center on race, ethnicity, second-language acquisition, and/or class as these have historically been some of the major determiners of the kind and quality of education received by students in the United States. The ways that these issues permeate the genre of literacy narratives will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

What constitutes literacy, what conditions shape acquisition of literacy, and how people overcome adversity in literacy acquisition are three major characteristics that shape these canonical literacy narratives. In addition, perhaps the most obvious feature, but one that is important nonetheless, is that the three canonical narratives of Rose, Rodriguez, and Villanueva are journeys of men. They are not stories of women

or of communities—though they may be indirectly—but are instead stories of men who have heroically overcome personal hardships or circumstances to become well-respected in their fields and in public spheres. Though literacy narratives written by and about women do exist, these are not as well-known as the literacy narratives currently forming a canon within the genre. The popularity of *Hunger of Memory*, *Bootstraps*, and *Lives on the Boundary* may indicate that people often think of this genre in terms of male power, struggle, and achievement.

It is easy to see why teachers would gravitate toward these three literacy narratives. *Hunger for Memory*, *Bootstraps*, and *Lives on the Boundary* are rich accounts of the complex nature of literacy. They are skillfully written, presenting readers with meaningful reflections upon society, culture, and the educational system within the United States. These narratives provide ample opportunity for students to take note of and enter into discussion about how literacy cannot easily be defined; how literacy is influenced by a variety of historical, cultural and social factors; and how individuals are constantly faced with the task of how to position themselves with regard to literacy contexts. In the following chapter, I'll argue for expansion of literacy narratives used as examples within the classroom, moving away from the canonical focus, and for locating literacy narratives in other university contexts outside of the composition classroom.

Conclusion

The genre of literacy narratives is one that is subject to constant redefinition in terms of what constitutes a literacy narrative and what the purpose of that narrative is. This is mainly due to the fluctuating and complex nature of literacy as a social act that exists in context and continually changes. How people represent literacy within a narrative form is also subject to change, as emerging literacies, such as multimodal literacies, provide new opportunities for making meaning that differ in significant ways from textual representation of experiences.

As a genre and assignment, the literacy narrative has much to offer both readers and writers who want to explore the connections between personal experiences with language and the societal forces that influence language choices and identity. Literacy narratives are primarily used to help students understand the complex nature of literacy and to reflect upon the significance of literacy within their own lives and communities. In doing so, scholars believe that students will develop a sense of themselves as literate in multiple contexts, including the context of the university—a context that requires a degree of agency and rhetorical strategizing to navigate.

Pedagogical strategies that inform the teaching of literacy narratives include discussions about representation and difference, collaborative exercises for generating ideas, peer review, and sharing of narratives. Imitation also plays a significant role in literacy narratives, contributing to the perpetuation of themes and viewpoints from familiar narratives. The examples provided to students by teachers contribute to

similarities in form and content, as students look for models to use as a starting point for narrating own experiences.

Ideally, literacy narratives can be used to connect the composition classroom to meaningful communities and social contexts that students are a part of within the university and outside of it. Literacy narratives would also ideally provide students with the chance to better understand the fluctuating nature of literacy and how individuals' experiences differ dramatically in terms of how they acquire, use, and value language.

Within the university as a whole, literacy narratives may be a starting point for providing students with the opportunity to choose how they will represent themselves and consider how their identities have been and are being shaped by literacy. In Chapter Three, I will problematize the current approach to literacy narratives. In doing so, my goal is not to undermine the positive work that literacy narratives contribute to students' understanding of literacy. Instead, I hope to emphasize new opportunities for the use of literacy narratives, both in terms of pedagogy and locations for the use of literacy narratives within the university. By looking at these overlooked opportunities, I will demonstrate how a variety of locations in the university could benefit from the use of literacy narratives to aid students in developing identities as students, writers and professionals within their fields.

CHAPTER THREE: PROBLEMATIZING THE CURRENT APPROACH TO LITERCY NARRATIVES AND CONNECTING LITERACY NARRATIVES TO DIVERSE UNIVERSITY CONTEXTS

Introduction

In Chapter Two, I discussed common approaches to teaching literacy narratives within the composition classroom. These included discussing literacy as an act that moves beyond reading and writing, reading canonical and student-written narratives, and having students write and share their own literacy narratives. In Chapter Three, I will problematize the current approach to literacy narratives by discussing issues with presenting only canonical texts in classes. I argue that when students read primarily these literacy narratives and then emulate them in their own writing, what occurs is often reproduction of the same kinds of situations, power relationships, and thematic elements that may not lead students to consider critically ways, different from the models, that literacy is a part of their own lives.

My goal in problematizing the current approach to literacy narratives is not to discount the genre or to argue that students receive no benefits from reading canonical texts, but rather to draw attention to possibilities for the use literacy narratives that are not currently recognized, both within the composition classroom and in other university contexts. I will discuss these contexts—writing in the disciplines (WID) courses, first-year seminars and introductory courses to students' majors—and how instructors might consider using literacy narratives to more fully engage students with writing that relates to their development as professionals within their field.

The approach to literacy narratives that I will argue for is based on three theoretical lenses: 1) New Literacy Studies, which situates literacy as a complex action in historical and social contexts; 2) Theories of identity formation from Kenneth Burke and scholars like David Bartholomae and Nancy Sommers; and 3) Theory from Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID), which look at writing throughout a student's career and in terms of disciplinary practices, the mastery of which demonstrates a student's understanding of their field and contributes to their sense of themselves as a member of a disciplinary community.

Canonical Texts

As I discussed in Chapter Two, many of the commonly-used examples of literacy narratives share a number of features. First, the narratives of canonical texts tend to be similar thematically, focusing on issues of class and ethnicity. Second, the most commonly used narratives center on male experiences, describing a hero's journey that foregrounds issues of power and opposition. Third, in the cases of Richard Rodriguez, Mike Rose, and Victor Villanueva, the narratives are from established authors, two of whom are leading scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric, the third in education. The narratives of these authors illustrate well the three issues described here. Though all three authors could be discussed as examples in each category, I will discuss one author for each category to provide a more in-depth look at how that author enacts a particular theme or feature in his text.

Class and Ethnicity

Many literacy narratives tell stories of students acquiring a second language or overcoming class issues that led them to struggle with education. As with Victor Villanueva's *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color,* literacy narratives often focus on minority groups, whether immigrants, children of immigrants, or second language learners. These are powerful stories which demonstrate ways that individuals like Villanueva have overcome difficulties that relate to power, personal identity, and familial relationships.

Bootstraps chronicles Villanueva's journey through the public school system as he first learned English and eventually went on to become a professor and respected compositionist. He deals with issues of ethnicity, class, and second language acquisition; and his multi-genre narrative depicts the moves he had to make between discourse communities. Throughout his narrative, Villanueva switches between the third person and first, between the compositionist and the young man struggling to get into a local college-prep high school, between his identity as a Puerto Rican and his identity as a rhetorician. Villanueva describes this movement between communities and the way his language changed depending upon his domain:

> Spanglish was simply Spanish: "Papi, *dame la* hammer." No need to correct; that wasn't English. Spanish and Spansligh at home. Standard English at home and in school. Black English on the block. Different rules in different places. I knew that. Language was not the problem of the would-be drop out. (8)

At a young age, Villanueva was particularly adept at code-switching between languages for different communities. Students who are deeply tied to multiple

communities with varying literacy practices can find navigating between those communities difficult, especially when they are, as Villanueva puts it, “unable to deny the old or the new” (39). Rather than identifying only with one community, Villanueva encourages readers to embrace the idea of identity coming from multiple communities that shape language practices, values, and beliefs. Language, ethnicity, class, and interaction with many teachers and students in the public school system all shaped how Villanueva identified himself as a young man.

Even in graduate school and later publishing articles as a professional rhetorician and compositionist, Villanueva struggled with his identity as a minority within the academic community. Villanueva describes himself as “the only portorican rhetorican he knows” and says “in terms of others of color, affirmative action is not affirmative enough. In terms of one being acted upon affirmatively, he always wonders if, maybe, he isn’t as smart as people say he is” (13). His identity as a Puerto Rican causes Villanueva to experience the literacy practices of the university, such as having work accepted for publication, in ways that those who are from the majority would not. Though he is an accepted member of a community of rhetoricians, Villanueva believes that he will always “somehow be an outlander,” and he describes feeling “alone professionally” because of his awareness of issues of class and color (xv). Though much of Villanueva’s narrative involves conflict and contradictions, his purpose, he says, is to encourage people to reflect upon the practices that shape classroom experience and student experiences (xvii).

The issues faced by minority students in education is one of the main reasons Mary Soliday feels literacy narratives are so useful in composition classrooms. She writes,

> Reading and writing literacy stories can enable students to ponder the conflicts attendant upon crossing language worlds and to reflect upon the choices that speakers of minority dialects and languages must make. (Soliday 512)

Students like Villanueva make linguistic choices frequently in order to move between "language worlds." Soliday asserts that literacy narratives provide students with a chance to actively consider the differences between these language worlds and the identities, values, and practices associated with each.

Soliday describes how minority students benefit from writing literacy narratives:

> Because literacy narratives are often so focused on the meeting and clashing of identities, languages, and cultures, writing literacy narratives allows our basic writing and non-traditional students—those others of the academic landscape—hitherto represented largely by teachers speaking on their behalf…to enter into and influence the contemporary debates surrounding multicultural education. (513)

As is shown through Villanueva's writing, literacy narratives can be valuable for teachers to reflect privately upon practices and for students to make sense of clashing identities and communities. What seems important to remember, however, is that students and teachers have experiences with literacy beyond those that involve conflict, clashing of identities, and struggles to overcome adversity. Within the university setting, literacy is enacted in many other ways besides those of conflict. For example, students and teachers engage in collaborative research; students access

texts from a variety sources such as databases, websites, and archives; scholars engage in interdisciplinary work that combines discourses, methods of research, types of evidence, and methods of communicating information to readers.

By encouraging students to look beyond literacy as solely a point of conflict in their education, teachers can help students to see the variety of ways that literacy has influenced their experiences—often in ways that build community, create ties between families, and reinforce inclusionary practices. This does not mean that class and ethnicity should be ignored, by any means. Students can benefit from hearing other students' stories and dialoguing about the ways literacy is used in domains like school and home. Deborah Mutnick describes personal essays as a "potential source of knowledge about realities that are frequently misrepresented, diluted or altogether absent in mainstream depictions" (84). That is, while mainstream depictions may represent literacy as an automatic path to achievement and success, stories students hear from each other carry a more realistic representation of the realities faced by students within the classroom. These narratives, when based on limited models, however, may also carry with them many of the tropes students have read previously, limiting the range of topics written about in literacy narratives to those of difference, inequality, and conflict.

Students who have not experienced difficulties relating to class or ethnicity can feel alienated when their own experiences are not represented within examples, making it difficult for them to generate content that moves beyond conflict when writing their literacy narratives. Conflict may even be manufactured by students in

order to conform their stories to the example narratives. If teachers draw attention not only to narratives of conflict and/or issues of difference based on ethnicity and class, but to narratives that explore the diverse ways people use literacy outside of these common themes, students can choose from a broader range of topics when portraying the way literacy relates to values, beliefs, and meaningful relationships that shape their identities.

The Masculine Hero's Journey

Much like Joseph Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces,* the masculine heroes within literacy narratives have distinct points of departure, initiation into new languages or uses of languages, victory over adversity, personal transformation, and a return to their origins—a return which illustrates differences between how the hero once was portrayed and how the hero has transformed. Though the authors who write literacy narratives do complicate this journey—the return is not always triumphant, and, as Richard Rodriguez illustrates, what is gained through language acquisition is not always a substitute for what is lost in the process—the example narratives commonly given to students are ones which depict a masculine hero who overcomes adversity and ends in a position of power and privilege.

Richard Rodriguez's story *Hunger for Memory* describes his heroic journey. Rodriguez is a freelance writer, and in the 1990s, he was often invited to speak on minority education in a variety of academic settings and was considered “a provocative speaker” and “notorious among leaders of America’s Ethnic Left”

(Rodriguez *Hunger* 4). Rodriguez left academia in the mid-1990s, attributing his departure to affirmative action:

> My decision was sparked by affirmative action. There was a point in my life when affirmative action would have meant something to me — when my family was working-class, and we were struggling. But very early in life I became part of the majority culture and now don't think of myself as a minority. Yet the university said I was one… Affirmative action ignores our society's real minorities — members of the disadvantaged classes, no matter what their race. (Rodriguez "A View")

Rodriguez goes on to describe how he was offered positions immediately once he graduated, though nobody wanted to speak of affirmative action and of minorities within his field. Since leaving academia, Rodriguez has been "editor of the Pacific News Service in San Francisco and a contributing editor of *Harper's"* (Rodriguez "A View"). In Rodriguez's literacy narrative, *Hunger for Memory,* he describes his journey to his position as a speaker and freelance writer, noting that "it is education that has altered [his] life. Carried [him] far" (*Hunger* 5).

A child of Mexican immigrants, Rodriguez did not know English, but he soon learned it within the public school system in California. Through his changing linguistic practices, he experienced a departure from his close-knit family and became a contributing member of the classroom. Rodriguez writes,

> My teacher understood…that I needed to speak a public language. So their voices would search me out, asking me questions…I'd mumble, not really meaning to answer. The nun would persist, 'Richard, stand up. Don't look at the floor. Speak up. Speak to the entire class, not just to me!'" (*Hunger* 19-20).

Rodriguez's teacher attempts to draw him into the English language, pointing to how the use of English allows him to reach a broader audience than Spanish, the language Rodriguez uses only at home. At first, Rodriguez depicts himself as deeply tied to his family and to Spanish. He does not think of himself as a member of a public community. However, Rodriguez reaches the point where "[o]ne day in school, [he] raise[s] his hand to volunteer an answer. [He speaks] out in a loud voice. And [he] [does] not think it remarkable when the entire class underst[ands]" (*Hunger* 22). A transformation occurs in him at this point, and he describes how he changed "from the disadvantaged child [he] had been only days earlier" (Rodriguez *Hunger* 22). This change was predicated upon his public use of English.

Rodriguez depicts literacy as the main factor that moved him from his position as a disadvantaged non-native speaker of English to a position of privilege within his classroom. He overcomes obstacles associated with learning a new language and finding a new identity within the dominant culture of Sacramento, California. This transformation frees him of the disadvantages associated with speaking a minority language. Though Rodriguez does emphasize the heroic aspects of his journey, he also complicates these aspects with the price of achieving a public identity.

Rodriguez experiences internal conflict as distance develops between his family members who speak English and those who primarily speak Spanish. Rodriguez "no longer kn[ows] what words to use in addressing [his] parents" when English becomes his primary language (*Hunger 24)*. Eventually, Rodriguez becomes acutely aware of the silences that come with "no longer bother[ing] to listen with care

to the sounds of English in public…[and] grow[ing] careless about listening to the sounds of family members when they spoke" (*Hunger* 25). Though the details of his story show the internal conflict he feels not knowing how to keep his intimate relationships intact when learning another language, Rodriguez arrives at a point where he views this situation differently. He realizes that *"[i]ntimacy is not created by a particular language; it is created by intimates*," and in viewing his change as both linguistic *and* social, he begins to understand the choices that many minority students must make without support from those who have experienced similar adversity (Rodriguez *Hunger* 32). Like most heroes' journeys, this story is compelling and predicated upon conflict, loss, and adversity.

Both internal and external conflicts relating to the individual hero play a central role in *Hunger for Memory*, forcing readers' attention to issues of language and power. The conflicts experienced by Rodriguez are overcome to some degree by his intelligence, perseverance, and new-found abilities participating in public spheres. By the end of his narrative, Rodriguez has undergone a heroic transformation, finding that he can have a public identity and still maintain intimacy with family and friends regardless of each person's linguistic community. The narrative of the empowered hero is one that Corkery describes as particularly appealing to students:

> One of the most appealing features of the use of literacy narratives in a writing classroom is its witness to the process of making the transition into a new, more empowering linguistic community...The personal life overcomes the anonymous institution. The personal voice breaks through and makes a claim. Such authors can pull students magnetically with their hard-knocks credibility and educated polish. (49)

In *Hunger for Memory,* Richard Rodriguez's voice literally breaks through when he speaks out in class and is not surprised that he is understood by the teacher and his classmates (22). Rodriguez goes on to break away from the "anonymous institution" and eventually leaves academia completely, reasoning that he does not want to be defined solely by his ethnicity (Corkery 49). In describing this transition from a silent boy with no public identity to a confident man moving away from the institution after having graduated and been offered positions at universities, Rodriguez asserts his individuality and his move to a position of privilege within a public community.

Because individualism and personal agency are often emphasized as benefits of telling one's story in a literacy narrative, many students, as Corkery points out, find the hero's journey appealing. The new community the hero enters into is usually depicted as "more empowering," causing it to be viewed as more desirable (Corkery 49). In *Hunger for Memory,* Richard Rodriguez moves to a public position of privilege, while his personal life suffers until he realizes he can maintain both identities without sacrificing one. Despite his ongoing internal struggle, Rodriguez does become part of a powerful linguistic community where his writing, ideas, and work are sought after by others within his field. Though his narrative demonstrates the problematic nature of idealizing literacy as necessarily leading to empowerment, his story still follows the path of a masculine hero who achieves a level of social and linguistic competence that greatly benefits him despite his personal struggles.

The focus on these masculine journeys raises a number of important questions about the representation of literacy. How are women's journeys represented? Are they also heroes of their stories with a similar narrative arc? Must power, conflict, and adversity be at the center of a story in order for it to be considered a literacy narrative? What would a literacy narrative that does not focus on power and conflict look like? Because of the diversity of students within composition classrooms, these questions are particularly important to ask, as many students may find a masculine hero's journey hard to identify with. However, with examples focusing so often on success stories and a hero triumphing in the fact of hardships, students often turn to this as a theme in their own literacy narratives.

In "Successes, Victims, and Prodigies: 'Master' and 'Little' Cultural Narratives in the Literacy Narrative Genre," Kara Poe Alexander describes how student narratives often reproduce "prevailing cultural representations of literacy perpetuated through literature, film, television, and the news media" (609). In a study of student-written literacy narratives at a Midwestern university, Alexander found that students reproduced these "cultural narratives" frequently in their own stories (611). The most common narrative was a literacy-as-success story, where the student overcomes challenges and acquires literacy, leading them to success. In addition, fifteen percent of all narratives in student essays included a hero in their story, emphasizing the student as an individual who, through self-reliance and perseverance, overcomes hardships to achieve success or liberation through their literacy acquisition (Alexander 615). Alexander asks, "[I]f incorporating the master narrative that literacy

automatically leads to success is incomplete and even inaccurate, then what other representational options do students have when they compose a literacy narrative?" (611). Alexander's question is an important one for teachers to consider as they assign literacy narratives to be read by students. If the literacy narratives being used in class represent literacy primarily in terms of a cultural narrative that shows literacy as a path to success and tied to overcoming challenges, students can miss opportunities to talk about literacy in new ways—ways that challenge cultural narratives that do not represent the students' own experiences. Alexander notes that narratives which approach literacy in unorthodox ways assume that "literacy is multiple, contextual, and ideological…present[ing] many truths about literacy, not one Truth about it" (611). This article was published after much of this thesis was drafted. It is discussed in brief here due to the importance of Alexander's findings and the questions she poses about students' options when writing literacy narratives.

Without alternative examples of literacy to consider, students are compelled to write about literacy in ways that focus on conflict and power struggles and that may not take into account or pay credence to other important ways that literacy is operating within their lives. Students can benefit from diverse literacy narratives, of both men and women, where the plots and outcomes of the narratives vary, demonstrating how literacy is affected by gender, time period, and location. Diverse narratives might include narratives of women, narratives of community literacy, narratives of self-sponsored or private literacies, or narratives of collaboration.

In *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson note that "[t]he growth of gender, ethnic, and area studies programs to address the interests of new educational constituencies has created a demand for texts that speak to diverse experiences and issues" (5). Autobiographical writing and literacy narratives in particular offer these kinds of texts that speak to diverse experiences. For example, Smith and Watson describe how through women's autobiography,

> [a] wide and growing range of narrative projects have generated new or hybrid forms for addressing diverse audiences—forms such as pathography, collective histories, collaborative life writing projects, testimonial and witnessing…bilingual projects, survival narratives, performance art [and] ethnography. (37)

Literacy narratives may be found in autobiographical writings, and the voices of women can add to students' understanding of the diverse ways that literacy is used.

Historically, autobiographical writing was associated with men. In *A Poetic of Women's Autobiography,* Sidonie Smith asserts that

> [i]n privileging the autonomous or metaphysical self as the agent of its own achievement and in frequently situating that self in an adversarial stance toward the world, 'autobiography' promotes a conception of the human being that valorizes individual integrity and separateness and devalues personal and communal interdependency. (39)

If students read narratives that feature primarily male heroes asserting individuality in opposition to adversity, this notion of the autobiography as a male genre of "separateness" is perpetuated, and the writing that students produce may also reflect this approach to writing about personal experiences. Though literacy narratives written by women may also assert the self in opposition to the world, there are other ways that women's narratives situate relationships. As described by Sidonie Smith and

Julie Watson, women's writing may feature communities, collective histories, or collaborative writing. Providing students with this variety of voices can help students, regardless of gender, achieve a greater understanding of ways that literacy is enacted by individuals who are members of meaningful communities that influence identity.

Illustrating these other settings and types of literacy as equally important and valid for critical discussion and reflection can open up possibilities for students who are struggling to consider literacy in a broader context. Issue of power and literacy often create oppositional or adversarial relationships between people, but there are other relationships that are also created through the use of literacy. Communities are built, families are strengthened, and minority voices are asserted through literacy practices that may not reflect the self as an autonomous and heroic "agent of its own achievement" (Smith 39). Students who find it hard to see themselves within the masculine hero's journey may be able to locate their own experiences in narratives of women or of communities.

Professionals in Rhetoric and Composition

The third common theme within literacy narratives can be seen in Mike Rose's narrative, *Lives on the Boundary.* Rose tells the story of his struggle through high school and college to eventually become a respected compositionist. His narrative looks back at his difficulties from a place of empowerment and privilege, as he is currently a highly regarded scholar, teacher, and writer. Both his and Villanueva's narratives are of members of the Rhetoric and Composition field, and both authors are

attentive to issues that arise from moving between discourse communities and developing the skills needed by professionals within their field. Rose's narrative in particular is one often read by students, as he describes his struggles throughout high school as well as when entering the university. Rose describes his purpose in writing the book as a way of discussing an education system that is "obsessed with evaluating…children, with calibrating the exact distance from some ideal benchmark" (xi). Rose was once labeled "underprepared" and "remedial," and he describes his own path to being redefined, but notes that most students are not as lucky as he was (xi). By combining "vignette and commentary, reflection and analysis," Rose uses his position within the Composition community to demonstrate how much is lost when school systems focus on measuring people rather than seeing the "[student] abilities [that are] hidden by class and cultural barriers" (xi-xii).

In *Lives on the Boundary,* Mike Rose describes how his family scraped together enough money to send him to a private school in South Los Angeles when he was young. They believed that a quality education would lead to a better life for him and that a quality education meant Catholic school. In the chapter "I Just Wanna Be Average," Rose describes his time spent in the classroom as "one long, vague stretch of time" where he would "slump down in [his] seat and page through [his] reader, carried along by the flow of sentences in a story," dreading the tests that would follow (19). Rose describes how he arrived in the vocational track of the school:

> Mercy relied on a series of tests, mostly the Stanford-Binet, for placement, and somehow the results of my tests got confused with those of another student named Rose. The other Rose apparently

> didn't do very well, for I was placed in the vocational track, a euphemism for the bottom level. Neither I nor my parents realized that English-Level D were dead ends. The current spate of reports on schools criticizes parents for not involving themselves in the education of their children. But how would someone like Tommy Rose, with his two years of Italian schooling, know what to ask? And what sort of pressure could an exhausted waitress apply? (24)

Here it is clear that Rose is speaking from a position of knowledge and awareness about the state of current public schools and using his own experiences to critique the practices that lead students into "the bottom level" programs that Rose later describes as "a dumping ground for the disaffected" (26). He clearly demonstrates his understanding of himself as a student, his parents as members of the working class struggling to put their son through private school, and his school as part of a system that does not understand the situation of families in lower classes. Though it is an error in testing that leads Rose to the vocational track, it is the use of tests to stratify and relegate students to a classroom of low standards and disregard for their abilities that Rose objects to. It is the identity associated with the vocational track that leads Rose to act disaffected, sarcastic, and stupid, despite his clear interest in reading and science (29).

Rose later describes a teacher who helped him move into college prep courses, but how his lack of preparation in the year spent in the vocational track led to difficulty when he entered the university. The humanities had their own language for discussing ideas, making arguments, and expressing meaning; and Rose struggled through philosophy and English courses (Rose 21-47). Rose's narrative tracks his progress through his undergraduate, graduate, and teaching career as he becomes

acquainted with the school system and the ways curriculum, language, and standards affect students. From this vantage point, he notes that in America, "with so many platitudes about motivation and self-reliance and individualism…we find it hard to accept that [these platitudes] are serious nonsense" (47). It is in part Rose's position in the field of composition that allows him to be so persuasive in his narrative, as he recognizes the problems associated with common beliefs about literacy and can use his own story to demonstrate how schools reinforce those beliefs through a lack of support for students who need guidance.

Rose calls for guides and models to help students achieve in universities:

> [The] journey up through the top levels of the American educational system will call for support and guidance at many, many points along the way. You'll need people to guide you into conversations that seem foreign and threatening. You'll need models, lots of them, to show you how to get at what you don't know. (47-48)

Rose's literacy narrative is now one of those models, and one that is highly regarded by teachers who assign literacy narratives to be read and written within composition classrooms. Regardless of students' majors, the support and guidance that Rose describes is important for students entering unfamiliar discourses. Literacy narratives provide models for students, and the more models available to students, the more likely they are to find aspects of their own experiences in the stories. However, with models focused primarily on professionals in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, students may find it hard to identify with the experiences of narrators who describe entering professional discourses that vary greatly from other disciplines in term of literacy practices, expectations, and challenges.

Most students in first- and second-year composition courses are not planning to enter the field of Rhetoric and Composition. These students represent all majors and are working toward a variety of goals, making it difficult for teachers to engage them in readings if the examples do not feel relevant or are too focused on one particular discipline's issues. If students are provided with narratives from authors who represent a variety of disciplines, they may be more likely to involve themselves in considering critically how their own experiences and discursive communities differ from or are similar to those within the texts—especially if those texts represent people who have been on similar paths to their own. As Rose notes, "You'll need models, lots of them, to show you how to get at what you don't know," and the composition classroom as well as other university settings can be a place where students engage with a variety of models that will strengthen their understanding of the challenges associated with acquainting themselves with literacy practices in their own disciplines (48). Locating literacy narratives in a variety of university contexts can provide students with the chance to consider literacy from multiple perspectives.

Literacy Narratives within University Contexts

Up until now, I've discussed literacy in a narrow sense, describing the common practice of situating literacy narratives within composition classrooms. However, as literacy within the university is an element of all coursework, I want to suggest new opportunities for the use of literacy narratives in other locations within the university. This assignment is appropriate for students within classes like first-year seminars,

introductory courses to the major, and WID courses. These classes do not traditionally assign literacy narratives, but I would argue that the nature of these courses and their goals coincide with many of the benefits that students experience from reading and writing literacy narratives.

The writing that students do within the disciplines is an integral part of understanding and becoming an active member of a professional field, and it is within courses in the disciplines—introductory courses to the major, upper division courses which assume at least a partial understanding of the field, and writing intensive courses—that students begin to learn how scholars within their field form research questions, gather evidence, process information and communicate that information to others. As literacy narratives can detail the experiences of professionals within specific disciplines, I argue that students within these university contexts could benefit from considering the choices and challenges novices face when beginning to participate in the field's discourse. In order to discuss these three contexts within the university, I will use theory from Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), and Kenneth Burke's theory of identity to show how writing aids first year students in acclimating to the university and how WID courses develop students' professional identities.

The Relationship between Writing and Identity

Within the university, writing is one way that students develop and assert their identities as students and, later, as professionals. The relationship between writing and

identity is complex, as the *reason* students write, *what* they write, and *how* they write all assert an identity that others see through reading and interpreting that writing. Because of this, how students conceive of writing affects to what degree they feel like university students or members of particular professional fields.

David Bartholomae describes this issue in “Inventing the University:”

> It is very hard for [students] to take on the role—the voice, the persona—of an authority whose authority is rooted in scholarship, analysis, or research. They slip, then, into a more immediately available and recognizable voice of authority; the voice of a teacher giving a lesson or the voice of a parent lecturing at the dinner table. They offer advice or homilies rather than ‘academic’ conclusions. (62)

The goal of first year composition at many institutions is to acquaint students with academic language and how people within the university make arguments, analyze texts, and come to conclusions. Bartholomae notes that to successfully speak with this voice or persona of authority, a student must “assume privilege without having any…locating themselves within the discourse of a particular community—within a set of specifically acceptable gestures and commonplaces” (67). In order to do this, students must imitate what they have heard and read to reach the point of moving beyond imitation to a voice of authority that is assumed through privilege. Students’ identities are shaped as they attempt to take on voices, gestures, language, commonplaces, and rhetorical strategies particular to their discourses.

The goal of becoming an expert and speaking from a place of privilege takes time. WAC in a variety of courses and WID courses are sites where students develop professional identities through writing. First year composition begins this process as

students acquaint themselves with writing within a university setting; first year courses in the major and WAC continue the development of identity, as students continually write themselves into the conversations occurring within academia. In doing so, students identify themselves as participants in academic conversations, as novices who will eventually contribute to the growing body of knowledge within their disciplines.

Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz build on Bartholomae's discussion, acknowledging the point that first year students in particular must "assume privilege without having any," and Sommers and Saltz assert that at times "assuming privilege" means "admitting what you do not know, rather than pretending to possess expertise" (309). They highlight the importance of students being able to conceive of themselves as novices rather than as experts in order to view their education in stages, with each stage contributing to their understanding of the university and new discourses.

Sommers and Saltz conducted a longitudinal study at Harvard to track students as writers from the time they enter the university through their upper division courses. They found that writing was used in a variety of ways by students, "both academic and social, to engage students with their learning" (295). Sommers and Saltz note that through writing, students were more engaged with classes, expressed their own ideas, and felt a sense of accomplishment holding a tangible representation of their work (294-295). As a feeling of membership within the university is dependent upon a student's personality, engagement with material, and contributions to their fields, writing extensively in a variety of courses can develop this sense of membership and

identity as a college student. Sommers and Saltz describe their findings about writing and first-year college students:

> The enthusiasm that freshman feel is less for writing *per se* than for the way it helps locate them in the academic culture, giving them a sense of academic belonging. When faculty construct assignments that allow students to bring their interests into the course, they say to their students *This is the disciplinary field, and you are a part of it. What does it look like from your point of view?* (295-296)

The student responses in the Sommers and Saltz study reflect this view of writing as a way of learning and thinking in-depth about topics. In addition, students felt that they moved beyond regurgitating information to contributing within the field, where their own thoughts not only mattered but were important to the reader (Sommers and Saltz 296). Through writing, students begin to conceive of themselves as university students and as new members of discourses. Sommers and Saltz assert that this identity as a novice is important because students "build authority not by writing *from* a position of expertise but by writing *into* expertise" (298). That is, freshmen first learn to imitate writers, teachers, and ideas that they read and/or admire and practice using writing methods particular to the course and to their fields before "making [ideas] their own" and asserting these ideas from a position of expertise (Sommers and Saltz 298).

Those who can conceive of themselves as novices may find it easier to navigate writing in the university because hey feel membership within the university but are also open to learning the methods and commonplaces important to developing their position of a novice into a position of expertise. WID and Writing Intensive

courses are integral parts of this process, with students developing their identities as members of specific discourse communities by engaging with course materials and representing themselves as professionals writing for their disciplines.

In "Identity Matters," Sarah McCarthey and Elizabeth Mirre Moje address the issue of identity and representing one's self through text. They describe identity as "a consequence of interaction between people, institutions, and practices" and note that identity is particularly important because "who [students] are as individuals shape[s] their classroom interaction" and influences how they respond to texts, assignments, and requests for them to take on new identities" (McCarthey and Moje 230). In the case of students in first-year seminars, these identities may be that of a college student. Within introductory courses to the major or WID courses, students may be asked to take on the identity of a professional within their field, though the degree to which they are expected to enact this identity varies with the course level. How students respond to writing and situate themselves within particular discourses depends upon their understanding of and commitment to those discourses. The more students understand the discourse of the university or of their particular major, the more likely they are to feel as if they are an active member of that community.

Kenneth Burke's "A Rhetoric of Motives" offers a way of understanding how people identify with groups and become members of communities, just as first-year students strive to become members of the university and then professionals. Burke quotes W. C. Blum who states that "In identification lies the source of dedications and enslavements, in fact of cooperation" (Burke 1019). In order for identification to

occur, students have to find similarities between themselves and other members of the university. When people can identify with one another, they become, as Burke terms it, "consubstantial," "where *A* is not identical with his colleague, *B*. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with *B*…Two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common" or in terms of how they share "common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, [and] attitudes" (Burke 1019-1020). So while no two students may be alike, the fact that they are students, are at a specific level in their education, or are in the same discipline can make them consubstantial with each other, forming communities and identities as growing professionals.

Within these communities, how students uses language and interpret others' use of language contributes to their identity and sense of themselves as members of their field. Each discipline's goals, genres, and ways of communicating create consubstantiality, where colleagues and students are connected through common practices. As Burke puts it, "'[b]elonging' in this sense is rhetorical" because "we are clearly in the region of rhetoric when considering the identifications whereby a specialized activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class" (1023). Each discipline has these "specialized activities" associated with how ideas are communicated, and students who become familiar with these activities and participate in them begin to identify with the community and become a member of it. Literacy narratives that show these activities and how professionals acquired proficiency can make this process of becoming consubstantial with the members of the discipline more transparent to students who wish to join the same community.

Community is created by identification between members, and Charles Bazerman discusses genre's effect on identification in "Systems of Genres and the Enactment of Social Intentions." Bazerman describes writing as "a form of social action" that "people [use to] create individual instances of meaning and value within structured discursive fields and thereby act within highly articulated social systems through performances of genre." These "performances of genre" are predicated upon a specific identity being put forth by a writer—an identity based on the writer's familiarity with the genre, its purpose, and its audience. Within a discipline, Bazerman argues, there is a set range of performances and statuses that individuals can choose from. He asserts that "through an understanding of the genres available to [them, members of disciplines] can understand the roles and relationships open to [them]" (Bazerman). Understanding these genres and roles provides students with options to choose from about who they will identify with and how. The use of literacy narratives within the discipline-specific courses offers a new opportunity for students to see the range of options available to them as well as imagine ways to represent themselves within their disciplines.

After students recognize the shared genres, language, and values that create the discipline's range of identities to assert, they can liken themselves to members of the community and choose how to represent themselves when writing. An example of the shared genres and creation of identity within a community can be seen in the field of healthcare. According to Irene Clark and Ronald Fischbach, writing in healthcare is particularly important to "performing" as professionals within the field (18). The

authors note that in "Public Health Education, the exigence, purpose, and action [of writing] derives from the need to 'educate' the public about health issues" (Clark and Fischbach 18-19). By thinking of purpose, genre, and performance as linked within the discipline, students can then form an "appropriate" identity for that field—an identity that acts on behalf of the public through education while also considering the needs of a diverse audience when conveying important—and quite possibly life-altering—information. Professionals within the field of public health, through a shared commitment to public education and a shared understanding of genre and purpose are connected to one another and have the rhetorical sense of "belonging" that Burke describes as a natural consequence of consubstantiation (1023).

Columbia University's Narrative of Medicine program is another strong example of the importance of genre and purpose in creating identity. According to Columbia's website, the Narrative of Medicine program has a mission:

> [To] help doctors, nurses, social workers, and therapists to improve the effectiveness of care by developing the capacity for attention, reflection, representation, and affiliation with patients and colleagues. ("Program")

Similarly to public health, the narrative genre used by Columbia is tied directly to the goals of the healthcare field and the field's commitment to effective patient care. The narrative acts as a way of building the community and identity of the professionals as they feel "affiliated" with both patients and colleagues while also evaluating the professional work that is being done on a daily basis. In addition, being able to listen to the stories of patients in productive ways can lead to care that takes into

consideration patient needs and concerns. Through reflection and writing, medical professionals think critically about their roles within the field and how the narrative form has multiple purposes—to understand patient concerns more effectively and to strengthen one's own work as a medical professional.

Though not all fields use narratives as a way of developing identity or engaging in personal reflection, the narrative provides a way for professionals to represent themselves in writing and to reflect upon their identities as professionals. The literacy narrative can provide students with this same opportunity to reflect upon their own identities and development as students and professionals who are affiliated with colleagues through shared literacy practices, genres, and values. By reading and writing literacy narratives, students can build community while also developing a rhetorical sense of belonging that is crucial to becoming a contributing member of a professional field. The three university contexts I will discuss next—first year seminars, introductory courses to majors, and WID courses—I argue are new sites where reading and writing literacy narratives could be located to help students identify themselves as university students and as developing professionals.

First-Year Seminars and Introductory Courses in the Major

The first year at a university is a particularly important one for students, as they are transitioning into a new community where they will need to develop strategies for learning in a new environment that has expectations and challenges that differ from previous learning experiences. Though some students find this transition easier than

others, in general, the first year is one of great change for students as they enter into situations which are unfamiliar and that require them to adjust how they learn, study, and write about academic content.

In "Transition to College: Diverse Students, Diverse Stories," Patrick Terenzini *et al* studied students from a variety of backgrounds as they entered the university, noting that the difficulties transitioning into the university vary greatly depending upon a student's background. For students who were always expected to attend college,

> [c]ollege was simply the next, logical, expected, and desired stage in the passage toward personal and occupational achievement. The passage actually originates in the educational attainment of parents, older siblings, or close relatives who have at least attended, and frequently completed, college…For most of these students, the very fact that they had been admitted to a moderately selective college or university was evidence that academically they "belong" at their institution. (Terenzini *et al* 62)

For these students, the college experience is an extension of all of their previous experiences and corresponds with expectations from their family (Terenzini *et al* 62). In contrast, the experience of first-generation college students is not a continuation of previous expectations from family and friends:

> Among nontraditional, primarily first-generation, college students, however, the adaptation to college was far more difficult. Indeed, for many, going to college constituted a major *disjunction* in their life course. For these students, college-going was not part of their family's tradition or expectations. On the contrary, those who were the first in their immediate family to attend college were *breaking,* not continuing, family tradition. (Terenzini *et al* 63)

These differences in student populations mean that the transition experience is not consistent for all students, making it hard to deal with all of the concerns that first-year students experience when entering the university. Issues like preparedness for classes, time management skills, support from friends and family, and personal beliefs all color the first-year experience. As the title of Terenzini's article points out, the university is made up of diverse students with diverse stories, and the first year can be a time for student to make strong connections with other students, faculty, and institutional resources that will shape their academic careers.

First-year seminars are in part an attempt of universities to develop institutional resources that will help students, regardless of background, develop the skills necessary to deal with this moment of transition. First year introductory courses to the major are another way of developing skills for students, but they act as a focused look at the student's own professional goals—giving students the chance to investigate their chosen field and come to a fuller understanding of the role of that discipline within the university and public spheres. Because these courses help students begin to develop identities as members of academic communities, they would be particularly strong locations for literacy narratives to be read and written.

First-Year Seminars

First-year seminars are fairly new phenomena in universities. They first began in the 1970s and 80s in an effort to address "unacceptably high attrition rates, not just among at-risk students but among students at large" (Brent 254). Stephen Porter and

Randy Swing describe how first-year seminars have grown in use over the past four decades:

> A recent study by the Policy Center on the First Year of College reveals that 94% of accredited four-year colleges and universities in America offer a first year seminar to at least some students and over half offer a first-year seminar to 90% or more of their first-year-students. (1)

Though first-year seminars began with standard content that relates to the transition into academia, many first-year seminars are now theme-based with students focusing on a particular subject or project for an extended period of time (Brent 255).

In a seminar focused on transitioning into academia, students usually learn strategies for success in the university. This may include practice with study skills, time management, or an introduction to the university that will direct students to appropriate resources should any academic, social, or financial difficulties arise. These strategy or skills-based seminars act as a kind of extended orientation to the university. Skills-based first-year seminars may contain reading and writing about the university experience and about how to navigate new academic and social situations.

Marcia Roe Clark discusses the strategies students develop for transitioning to college in "Negotiating the Freshman Year: Challenges and Strategies among First Year College Students." Clark describes students' strategies for addressing situations like "overcoming obstacles," "seizing an opportunity," "adapting to change," and "pursuing a goal" (301-306). Clark asserts that students address these situations with strategies based upon a number of factors—"perceived responsibilities and obligations," "perceived various resources," "alternatives in a given situation,"

"persistence" and "confidence" (305-307). These types of situations and factors are discussed in first-year seminars that focus on skills for navigating university life. By actively considering the problems they may face in the university, students can strategize in advance and consider options that might not occur to them without classroom discussion or ideas from teachers, peers, and readings. Literacy narratives can provide a grounding point for conversation as well as a look at the literacy practices within the university that may force students to adapt to change, seize opportunities, or find alternatives to their current academic strategies.

Literacy narratives could also be read that highlight students using resources in a variety of ways within the university. For example, Mike Rose's narrative *Lives on the Boundary* discusses his use of resources like the library, visits to professors' office hours, and collaborative learning with other students. Many of the challenges students face as well as strategies for success described by Clark are discussed in literacy narratives. For example, persistence and confidence are often at the forefront of literacy narratives where the narrator must overcome a variety of obstacles to attain literacy in some form. Adapting to changes in types of instruction, identity as a student, and new environments are frequently illustrated in literacy narratives as well. Reading these narratives could reassure students of the number of resources and strategies available to them while also helping them to consider using literacy in ways that furthers their goals—such as through careful planning, interacting with other students to facilitate each other's learning, or writing reflectively on situations that have caused the need for new strategies.

Since first-year seminars are diverse in their content, there are a variety of ways that writing can be used to strengthen understanding of the university and of students' identities as members of an academic community. Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) pedagogy can be particularly useful in this regard by encouraging student reflection and active writing. WAC began in the 1970s as a response to changes in demographics in higher education (McLeod 53). In the 1970s, schools like City University of New York adopted an open admissions policy for all state residents who were high school graduates (Shaughnessy 1). Trends like this led to a rapid increase in enrollment and a greater need for schools to meet the needs of a diverse student body. WAC developed as one way to address student needs by encouraging writing beyond the composition classroom and throughout students' academic careers.

Susan McLeod describes WAC pedagogy as one that "mov[es] away from the lecture mode of teaching (the 'delivery information' model) to a model of active student engagement with the material…through writing, not just in English classes but in all classes across the university" (54). This pedagogy relies on the belief that "writing is the responsibility of the entire academic community" and emphasizes Writing to Learn (WTL) activities (Craig 2). Some WTL activities include journaling, exploratory writing, and practice pieces. The value of this type of writing is that it is low stakes, actively engages students, promotes critical thinking, and is reflective (McLeod 57). Within a first-year seminar any number of activities of this kind could be used in order to engage students in reflection on their transition into the university.

As WAC pedagogy emphasizes writing in all courses, a literacy narrative component could be particularly useful in first-year seminars. WTL activities could encourage students to actively engage with literacy narratives assigned as readings, to reflect upon their own literacy practices in and out of school, to generate content for narratives, and to think critically about the role that literacy is currently playing in establishing their identity as a first-year college student. WAC techniques also provide teachers with feedback, as short, student-centered writing assignments give teachers a sense of what students are learning and where they are struggling (McLeod 57). Because WTL assignments are generally not graded, these activities provide students with a chance to reflect without concerns about "getting the grade" while giving teachers with a chance to respond without evaluation. Literacy narratives, like WTL activities, are a chance for students to explore their own ideas and reflect upon the significance of "what they know and what they need to learn" (McLeod 55).

In a skills-based seminar where much emphasis is placed on navigating the new terrain of the university, engaging with ideas about developing literacies could be particularly helpful for students who are not sure "what they need to learn" and what strategies will be successful for writing within the university (McLeod 55). In addition, students benefit from reflecting upon their literacy experiences outside of school and recognizing how those experiences have shaped their identity. An assignment that allows students to discuss the significance of these experiences within and outside of the university encourages students to value literacy practices as an important part of their community involvement, especially within new discourses.

WAC "focuses not on writing skills per se, but on teaching both the content of the discipline and the particular discourse features used in writing about that content," making literacy narratives useful both in the skills-based first-year seminars *and* in content-specific seminars (McLeod 54). In a theme-based seminar, the focus of discussion is on a particular theme or issue relating to one field or, in a multidisciplinary seminar, to a number of different fields. There is significant variation in types of first-year seminars offered within universities. For example, one seminar might focus on a study of the SARS Virus while another seminar may focus on current agricultural issues. The specialties of the faculty influence what kinds of courses are offered, as theme-based first-year seminars are often taught by faculty members who can expertly discuss the theme with students, acting as a model for how scholars participate in academic discourse.

In “The Relative Contribution of Participating in a First-Year Seminar on Student Satisfaction and Retention into the Sophomore Year,” Darwin Handel writes, “concerns about the first-year experience are especially salient at large research institutions, where typically first-year students have limited contact with regular faculty members” (4). Handel survey a random sample of 1600 undergraduates, finding that while retention rates did not change based upon first-year seminars, students felt a stronger sense of community after participating in the first-year seminar with its small class size and contact with faculty (11-13). This sense of community from the first-year seminar can contribute to student enthusiasm about course content and their willingness to actively participate in class.

The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University describes the goals of first-year seminars:

> The focal point of the first year should be a small seminar taught by experienced faculty. The seminar should deal with topics that will stimulate and open intellectual horizons and allow opportunities for learning by inquiry in a collaborative environment. Working in small groups will give students not only direct intellectual contact with faculty and with one another but also give those new to their situations opportunities to find friends and to learn how to be students. Most of all, it should enable a professor to imbue new students with a sense of the excitement of discovery and the opportunities for intellectual growth inherent in the university experience. (20)

The Boyer Commission's report emphasizes the importance of this "direct intellectual contact with faculty" and with other students as a way becoming interested in the academic opportunities provided by the university (20).

Within a theme-based seminar, literacy narratives could be particularly helpful in engaging students with the course theme. For example, students in a theme-based seminar on the history of chemistry might read a portion of Oliver Sacks's *Uncle Tungsten: Memories of a Chemical Boyhood* which provides a historical overview of chemistry while detailing how Sacks became interested in chemistry as a young man, prior to becoming a neurologist. Students could then see the initial interest of Sacks as well as the many sponsors and influences that shaped his chemistry experiments and his eventual career path. Students taking a first-year seminar on ethnography might read *Ways with Words* by Shirley Brice Heath and discuss the literacy practices used within ethnography when a researcher works closely with community members and represents them in descriptive and ethical ways in text. Discussing the literacy

practices and lives represented in literacy narratives, students can engage with course content while also benefiting from the professor's viewpoint of the texts as an expert in the field.

While skills-based seminars may focus primarily on transition moments within the university and strategies for acquiring academic literacies, the theme-base seminars provide an opportunity for students to consider literacy from a disciplinary point of view. Though first-year students are not prepared to fully understand the demands of disciplinary writing, reading literacy narratives within a theme-based seminar and constructing their own literacy narratives with regard to course material could benefit students who are just starting to understand the differences between writing they have done in the past and writing for specific audiences within and outside of the university. Considering the example of the first-year seminar focused on the SARS Virus, a faculty member could introduce students to the genres associated with this content area and its audiences. For example, information presented to experts in the field might come in the form of a scholarly journal article, a dataset available on a government website, or a conference presentation, while information presented to the public might be in the form of a report, a website, or news article.

One way for literacy narratives to act as an ongoing asset to students throughout a theme-based course is for students to do WTL activities like journaling or directed free-writing about course concepts. Students can begin writing in the course with a discussion of what they already know about the topic or why they chose the particular seminar and continue to collect writing throughout the term that reflects

upon their developing understanding of the theme for the course. At the end of the theme-based seminar, students could write literacy narratives to look back at how their understanding of the theme has changed throughout the term. The writing they have done which details new terminology they've learned for discussing concepts, new genres for communicating to multiple audiences, and new ways of thinking about the theme of the course could provide much of the content for their narratives. In addition, a literacy narrative provides students with the opportunity to see all that they've accomplished throughout the term while also helping teachers assess how far students have come in their understanding of course concepts.

As the Boyer Report describes, first-year seminars can be an opportunity for students "to learn how to be students" through interaction with faculty and their peers (20). First-year seminars are an untapped opportunity for reflection upon literacy practices and development of an identity as a college student. Students can benefit from writing on a regular basis and actively reflecting upon the types of literacy they are using or developing, affirming their identities as college students and encouraging them to continue developing literacy practices that will help them to more fully engage with course content and disciplinary practices.

Introductory Courses to the Major

Introductory courses to the major are generally taken during a student's first year in the university. These courses introduce students to their major, its subfields, and the research and discourse communities within the field. Taught by faculty in the

department, these courses are often the first extended contact students have with professors in their major. In addition, many students who come into fields with only a cursory understanding of what it is professionals within this discipline do come to develop a more accurate and complex understanding of the major, its requirements, and the work done by its professionals. Because each student comes to their major through a different path based upon their own experiences, interests, and conceptions of the field, introductory courses to the major are a unique opportunity for people with common interests to interact and to evaluate whether or not this discipline is the right one for them considering their personal interests, abilities, and professional goals.

Writing within introductory courses to the major is particularly important, notes Ann Herrington in "Writing to Learn: Writing Across the Disciplines," because "an introductory course [is] where a student is being exposed to the methodologies and jargon of a discipline for the first time" (121). These classes truly are introductions, requiring each assignment to build on the previous assignments in order to move "from less to more complex conceptual tasks" (Herrington 121). Herrington gives the example of a course titled "Introduction to Economics." In this course, students must learn to use "the fundamentals of economic theory and terminology," "to analyze and to apply basic theory to solve economic problems," and to "evaluate rudimentary recommendations in the field of governmental economic policy" (121). This course begins with terms students must understand in order to use these terms to analyze problems and eventually use these analysis skills to evaluate economic policy. Herrington describes other introductory courses like "Introduction to Psychology"

where WTL activities are used in order to guide students through this developmental process of understanding the basic language of their discipline prior to seeing how that discipline performs more complex tasks such as analyzing, evaluating, and making claims.

Though students come from a variety of backgrounds in an introductory course to the major, they all share the same need to understand how their discipline uses specific jargon, what counts as evidence, what research methods are used, and how information is communicated between professionals. Literacy narratives within introductory courses could be used as a starting point for understanding the work that is done within the discipline as well as the language used to describe that work. Reading literacy narratives of people in their field can also point students to how other novices in the field have managed the initial stages of becoming a professional.

For example, students in an Introduction to Mathematics course might read a section of André Weil's *The Apprenticeship of a Mathematician* to see how he began to understand the discipline of mathematics prior to his work with number theory. Weil describes his own drive to learn mathematics and how he subscribed to the *Journal de Mathématiques Elémantaires* which "published mainly problems and principally exam problems, for all levels of secondary education" and printed the names of those who correctly solved the problems (23). Later, his instructor Monsieur Collin "made a mathematician of [Weil]" by teaching him "how to write up mathematics" as opposed to just finding answers (Weil 27). Through looking at literacy narratives like Weil's and other mathematicians with differing specialties,

students could see these scholars' paths to learning mathematics as well as what led them to focus on particular sub-fields. Weil, for instance, works in a branch of pure mathematics, while other mathematicians may be in applied mathematics. As students read and discuss these literacy narratives with faculty, they can gain a better understanding of the rich possibilities for specialization in mathematics as well as some of the basic tools, terminology, and literacy practices of the discipline.

One of the valuable aspects of reading literacy narratives within introductory courses to the major is students seeing how others arrived at their interest within the field. They can then compare their own paths, noting how each person's reading, writing, and other literacy practices have developed and contributed to their involvement within their field. Writing literacy narratives and sharing them with peers also helps students identify with other novice mathematicians, medical professionals, sociologists, etc. In terms of faculty, reading student literacy narratives can provide teachers with a stronger understanding of how students' understanding of the field is developing as well as how students conceive of the discipline. By introducing discipline-specific language and ways of communicating as students are reading and writing literacy narratives, faculty can provide students with basic, but important, information about the discipline while also giving students a chance to WTL and practice using discipline-specific information in context. In Chapter Four, I'll offer a pedagogical framework and example literacy narratives that demonstrate how faculty can guide students through discussion of literacy practices within their discipline.

Because literacy practices are discipline-specific, becoming acquainted with those practices early in a student's academic career can help students to identify themselves with their field and develop as professionals. Though students won't develop many of the ways of researching and writing within the disciplines until later in their academic careers, through literacy narratives, students can begin to understand the way that knowledge is constructed within their disciplines. Literacy narratives can help students see the processes through which others have gone in order to become part of a discipline, and by viewing this position of novice as it transforms to expert, students may find the path to writing in the disciplines easier to navigate.

Writing in the Disciplines

Writing in the Disciplines (WID) is a strain of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) focusing on the literacy practices and conventions that are particular to specific disciplines, usually in upper division courses. WID principles emphasize that "[e]ven though students read disciplinary texts and learn course materials, until they practice the language use of the disciplines through writing, they are less likely to learn that language thoroughly" (Kiefer "Why"). Students in WID courses practice reading and writing in ways that cultivate strong voices as members of disciplines. Because professional identity is tied to a person's ability to participate as a specific member of a discourse—to feel consubstantial with others and recognize their own writing practices as sharing similar goals, values, and traits as those of professionals in the field—WID courses are an important part of students becoming well-versed in

how professionals within their field think, act, and write. The difference between WID and writing outside of the disciplines is at the heart of why WID is so important within universities. Michael Carter describes this difference:

> It is the difference between knowledge and knowing, that is, disciplines as repositories and delivery systems for relatively static content knowledge versus disciplines as active ways of knowing. Some psychologists describe this distinction as declarative or conceptual knowledge on the one hand and procedural or process knowledge on the other, the difference between knowing that and knowing how…[F]aculty and students tend to understand learning in a discipline as a process of obtaining, at least in short term memory, the particular knowledge base of the discipline. The focus of WID, in contrast, tends to be on procedural knowledge, writing as a way of knowing in a discipline. (387)

This way of knowing includes things like how research is conducted in the disciplines, what counts as evidence within a discipline, how knowledge is created through particular ways of thinking about information, and how that knowledge is expressed to people both within and outside of the discipline. Carter points out that students need to do much more than just memorize content within their disciplines; they need to understand and be able to practice how that content was arrived at and express that knowledge in writing that suits the genres, expectations, and conventions of writing within the discipline (388-389).

For example, while a student may know *that* a sociologist studies society, looking at human interaction, institutions, classes, laws, etc, the student may not know *how* research is conducted, what counts as evidence within the discipline, and what genres are used to express this information to audiences within and outside of the discipline. In *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines,* Christopher Thaiss and

Terry Myers Zawacki describe Richard, "a sociology major [who] differentiates…three methodological and rhetorical strands of the discipline" (106). Richard writes, "'for me, the distinctive feature of writing in sociology are three-fold: explaining complex ideas in terms of social theory; report writing while conducting applied sociology; and writing ethnography for field work'" (qtd in Thaiss and Zawacki 106). The courses sociology majors take within their disciplines would establish what sociological theories are available to writers, how to apply these theories, what is included in a sociological report, and how ethnographic research is conducted in ways that accurately and ethically represent people's interests. All disciplines contain complex ways of communicating information, and using literacy narratives could help to make some of these literacy practices more transparent to students who are beginning to practice communicating as professionals.

Literacy narratives can be used within WID courses in order to show students how professionals have developed the discipline-specific literacy practices that inform their work. By reading narratives that feature settings, materials, and methods of communicating which are important to the discipline, students could see how professionals describe their work and the rationale behind it. For example, the sociology major could read a literacy narrative where ethnographic work is conducted on site and the literacy practices of observation and note-taking, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and journaling are used prior to the information being translated into a report or journal article for audiences within the sociology field. Reading a literacy narrative where this information is translated again for a lay audience in the form of a

magazine article, a book, or presentation could help students understand how professionals adapt their use of language, genre, and purpose to fit their audience.

Another way that literacy narratives can be used within WID courses would be for an in-depth look at genres associated with the field. For example, students studying ecology may be familiar with scientific reports that contain an abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion, and conclusions sections. They may not, however, be as familiar with how to take the research they have conducted and communicate it in a way that influences government officials, voters, and a broad public audience. Reading a familiar text such as a study like that of Pew's Ocean Commission Report for 2003 and looking at how literacy practices are used to construct the report could lead to a starting point for then looking at an article by scientist, writer, and documentary filmmaker Julia Whitty's article "The Fate of the Ocean" which is informed by the 2003 report and published in the political magazine *Mother Jones*. This exercise demonstrates to students how Whitty takes information from research within the discipline in order to make an argument about the ocean to a broad group of liberal readers.

After seeing how Whitty adjusts genre, style, and tone in order to address a more public audience than that of a research report, students might then turn to the literacy narrative of Whitty as seen in sections of her book *Deep Blue Home.* Within this book, Whitty chronicles her initial forays into ecology and collaborative research on Isla Rasa, an island where "97 percent of the world's population of elegant terns nest" (9). She goes on to describe her work as a filmmaker of documentaries about

ocean life, including information about the effects of fishing and other human practices on the ocean and its many species. Within this narrative, Whitty situates herself as a scientist, a filmmaker, and a human being who cares about the fate of the ocean. As readers, students would have the opportunity to engage with this literacy narrative to discover how a professional conveys disciplinary information in a way that can connect with scientists and lay people alike for a common goal that draws the public into ecological issues.

Whitty's work could act as a model for students who could begin writing the traditional research papers which use literacy in ways that conform to scientific methods and presentations. After having done this, however, students could benefit from writing their own literacy narratives as the content of their research relates to their development as ecologists. An assignment like this not only helps students develop their identities as researchers and writers within the discipline but also gives them an opportunity to convey their personal approach to this issue in terms of how literacy practices inform their stance, their goals for educating the public, and the dissemination of ecological values that lead to a healthier environment and ecosystem for all beings.

There are many possibilities for literacy narratives within the disciplines. Literacy narratives can be used as readings to help students better understand the discipline and its literacy practices; they can be used comparatively to develop a more thorough understanding of genres available to professionals within a specific field; and they can be used to engage students with course materials as they write about their

own literacy practices and how their research can foreground discipline-specific concepts and literacy practices while also engaging a variety of readers. Because literacy narratives are a new genre outside of composition classrooms, teachers will need to have some basic pedagogical strategies that will help them guide students through both reading and writing literacy narratives within first-year seminars and WID courses. In the next chapter, I will argue for a pedagogical approach that can be useful for teachers who are not familiar with literacy studies and who wish to teach this genre effectively within their courses.

Conclusion

Reading and writing literacy narratives can be an opportunity for students to engage with literacy in a way that is critical and fruitful for them in their academic careers. Opportunities are missed, however, when the focus of discussions is solely upon issues of ethnicity, class, conflict, or one particular discipline. With a broader view of literacy narratives that moves beyond the use of canonical texts and that engages students in consideration of identity and how it is formed, this assignment can prove useful in other contexts besides composition courses. First-year seminars, introductory courses to the major, and WID courses are three new areas where literacy narratives might be located to provide students with a chance to discuss relevant issues of identity and literacy as they relate to the university and to their professional lives.

In Chapter Four, I will propose a pedagogical framework for teachers interested in having students read and write literacy narratives. This pedagogy uses

the language and theoretical framework of New Literacy Studies as a guide for how to discuss literacy narratives in context. After proposing this pedagogical approach, I will discuss three literacy narratives that describe literacy and its uses in a variety of contexts. These literacy narratives demonstrate the variety of texts available to teachers as well as narrative approaches that differ from the traditional themes found in canonical texts like those of Rodriguez, Rose, and Villanueva. By finding new texts and engaging in critical discussion of them, teachers can guide students as they consider the many ways that literacy is relevant to them as individuals and members of communities.

CHAPTER FOUR:
A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING LITERACY NARRATIVES AND EXAMPLES OF LITERACY NARRATIVES IN THE DISCIPLINES

Introduction

In this chapter, I will propose a pedagogical framework for teaching literacy narratives to students across the curriculum. Because teachers outside of composition courses may not be familiar with literacy narratives or with literacy theory, I offer this framework as a guide to classroom discussions as well as a way to assist students in crafting their own literacy narratives. Following this discussion of classroom pedagogy, I will apply the language and concepts from the framework to three literacy narratives: *Wait Till Next Year* by Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Deep Blue Home: An Intimate Ecology of Our Wild Ocean* by Julia Whitty, and *I Want to be a Mathematician: An Automathography* by Paul R. Halmos. These three narratives are written by a historian, a scientist and documentary filmmaker, and a mathematician, respectively. Through these stories, I will show the usefulness of Mary Hamilton's theory for constructing a pedagogy for discussion about literacy, identity, and disciplinary work available to students reading literacy narratives within the disciplines.

Literacy Narrative Pedagogy

As stated in Chapter Two, while there is some scholarly discussion of literacy narrative pedagogy—especially within composition—a pedagogical model for teaching literacy narratives has not been fully developed. If literacy narratives are

located within a variety of contexts in the university, teachers from many disciplines will need to have language to speak about literacy narratives and a model for teaching students to analyze narratives that they read and recognize elements for consideration while constructing their own narratives. I will extend the work of New Literacies Studies—in particular that of David Barton, Mary Hamilton, Brian Street, and Deborah Brandt—to inform and develop a model for teachers to use when teaching this new genre in first-year courses and WID courses. In this section, I will first briefly discuss New Literacy Studies as a theoretical grounding for practical pedagogy in for the classroom. I will then offer suggestions for pedagogy which scaffolds assignments in order to help students first understand concepts like "literacy," "literacy events," and "domains" before they apply these to readings and eventually construct their own literacy narratives.

Theoretical Grounding of Pedagogy

In the chapter "Literacy Practices" from *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context,* David Barton and Mary Hamilton build upon previous literacy scholarship from Brian Street and James Gee and discuss literacy as a social practice, a "powerful way of conceptualizing the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape" (7). Teachers can use literacy narratives to demonstrate how reading and writing are connected to social practices within the discipline and thus help students better understand how discipline-specific literacy practices contribute to a professional

identity. Using the proposed language and theoretical framework to discuss literacy practices and social structures, teachers can help students explore the manifestation and meaning of the literacy practices in their own lives and in the lives of others.

Some basic terms from New Literacy Studies can help to guide this discussion:

- Literacy Practices
- Literacy Events
- Domains of Life
- Sponsors

Barton and Hamilton describe the concept of literacy practices:

> In the simplest sense, "literacy practices" are what people do with literacy. However practices are not observable units of behavior since they also involve attitudes, feelings and relationships. This includes people's awareness of literacy and discourses of literacy, how people talk about and make sense of literacy. (7)

Though literacy is a social practice, Barton and Hamilton remind readers that the processes of how people make sense of literacy and their attitudes and feelings about literacy are internal processes that affect relationships (7-8). To start considering literacy practices, Barton and Hamilton suggest looking at "literacy events," which are "activities where literacy has a role" (8). This basic way of considering literacy is designed to spur discussion of the repeated actions that students engage in when writing within a course or a discipline. By identifying literacy practices and events within literacy narratives, students can actively consider what literacy actions,

attitudes, and processes are involved in a given situation. Teachers who are more familiar with the social structures of the university and of particular disciplines can provide added points of discussion where the literacy events may not be ones students had considered before.

Literacy events occur within what Barton and Hamilton term a "domain of life," or "domains of activity, such as home and school, or school and the workplace" (11). The home, Barton and Hamilton describe as a "primary domain" because it is "central to people's developing sense of social identity" (11). Each domain carries with it particular discourse communities, where people are consubstantial in their use of language, actions, and values. However, the boundaries between domains are not always perfectly clear; there are overlapping uses of language and identities that carry over from, say, the home domain, into the domain of community (Barton and Hamilton 11). When reading literacy narratives, students may be surprised by how similar literacy events occur in multiple domains. What seems like an unfamiliar context may be made more familiar by identifying the uses of language that are similar to a more familiar context. Identifying literacy domains can help students better understand how their own identities are asserted in different areas of life that are dependent upon literacy practices and relationships with others in the domain. When composing their own literacy narratives, students can then consider what domains, literacy events, and sponsors they want to include in their narratives.

Using Deborah Brandt's term "sponsors" of literacy gives students a way to consider the participants in various domains, discourse communities, and literacy

events. Brandt defines "sponsors" as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy – and gain advantage by it in some way" (*Literacy* 19). By identifying the sponsors within a literacy practice or event from their own life, students can see who has influenced their own literacy development, whether in positive or negative ways. These terms of "literacy practices," "literacy events," "domains of life," and "sponsors" can provide teachers with groundwork for a discussion of literacy in context.

Barton and Hamilton provide a list of suppositions about literacy as a social practice that can guide discussions about these contexts:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible, and influential than others.
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
- Literacy is historically situated.
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making. (8)

All of these suppositions situate literacy within context, noting both the social and fluctuating nature of literacy. This contextual nature of literacy is a key component of New Literacy Studies. Providing students with a few of these relevant suppositions and discussing them in relation to literacy narratives can help students identify the

history, cultures, practices, and institutions that influence the use of literacy within personal, academic, and professional contexts.

Mary Hamilton's discussion of photographs in "Expanding the New Literacy Studies" also adds to this theoretical framework by highlighting particular aspects of literacy events that students could focus on when reading and writing literacy narratives. Hamilton studied literacy events as they are represented through photographs. Her study involved collecting "images of people interacting directly with written texts" (17). For example, Hamilton looked at photographs of people reading newspapers, filling out applications, and casting ballots (17). She points to photographs as "particularly appropriate for documenting…aspects of literacy since they are able to capture moments in which interactions around texts take place" (Hamilton 17). These photographs are then used by Hamilton as a "source of data" whether they are from newspapers or part of research into literacy in context (17). She then examines these photographs depicting literacy events in order to see what event is taking place, who is involved, and how literacy is seen through images of specific moments of time.

Table 2. Basic Elements of Literacy Events and Practices, on the following page, illustrates Hamilton's framework for considering elements of literacy events and practices, focusing on four elements: participants, settings, artifacts, and activities. Looking closely at these elements provides researchers with a method for exploring literacy within the photograph's context. Though designed for examining photographs, this table is useful for discussion of literacy narrative texts as well, as it

provides teachers and students with a framework for reading and talking about literacy narratives with careful attention to some of the main features that compose a text and provide information about the significance of literacy within the narrator's story.

Table 2. Basic Elements of Literacy Events and Practices (Hamilton 17)

Elements visible within literacy events	**Non-visible constituents of literacy practices**
Participants: the people who can be seen to be interacting with the written texts	The hidden participants – other people, or groups of people involved in the social relationships of producing, interpreting, circulating and otherwise regulating texts
Settings: the immediate physical circumstances in which the interaction takes place	The domain of practice within which the event takes place and takes its sense of social purpose
Art[i]facts: the material tools and accessories that are involved in the interaction (including the texts)	All the other resources brought to the literacy practice including non-material values, understandings, ways of thinking, feeling, skills and knowledge
Activities: the actions performed by participants in the events	Structure routines and pathways that facilitate or regulate actions; rules of appropriacy and eligibility – who does/doesn't, can/can't engage in particular activities

The emphasis in this table should not be placed upon one side or the other. That is, the visible actions are a part of literacy; but by looking only at an action, an artifact, or a setting, students could miss the importance of the feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and ideologies that influence literacy. By paying close attention to both the visible and non-visible elements of literacy within narratives, students can gain a stronger understanding of the complexity of literacy and its contextual and social nature. In addition, with a model like this, students can think critically about the people, places,

activities, and artifacts—both visible and non-visible—which shape their own literacy events and practices. With language to guide discussions, and a theoretical model for dialogue about and construction of literacy narratives, teachers across the curriculum can feel more comfortable assigning this genre in the classroom.

Classroom Pedagogy

Students across the discipline will not be familiar with New Literacy Studies, so discussing the concept of literacy and what it means to them can begin a conversation on literacy as a social practice. While I will only discuss one or two examples of activities for each stage of classroom discussion, there are many activities for teachers to choose from that accomplish the same goals of guiding students through a discussion of concepts relating to literacy. A series of discussions and activities that effectively lead up to reading and then to writing literacy narratives could help students develop their understanding of literacy in stages:

1. Activity and discussion of “literacy” and “literacy events”
2. Activity and discussion of “domains”
3. Activity and discussion of “sponsors”
4. Discussion of “Basic Elements of Literacy” table and guided application of the elements to a text
5. Small groups reading literacy narratives and applying the table to the narratives

6. Activity for generating literacy narrative content and writing the literacy narrative

7. Peer Review

1. Activity and discussion of "literacy" and "literacy events"

One way for teachers to begin a conversation about literacy is ask students what the word "literacy" means to them, which will probably lead to the ideas of reading and writing and possibly other forms of literacy like "information literacy" or "computer literacy." In order to expand the conversation on literacy, students could brainstorm individually or in groups all the ways they read and write. Listing all of this information demonstrates to students the significance that reading and writing has in their lives—significance that extends well beyond reading and writing done for school. For example, students read to order lunch, to find a friend's name in an address book, to check sports scores, and to understand directions for medication; they write to deposit a check, to apply for a job, to make a grocery list, and to text message friends. These events that involve reading and writing are a way to enter discussion of all a person has to know or understand in order for that literacy event to occur. For example, a student text messaging a friend generally has the material resources to do so, the knowledge of how to use a cell phone, an understanding of the rhetorical situation of the text (audience, time, purpose) and knowledge of how asynchronous communication compares to synchronous. What is said within the text influences real-life relationships, creating a situation that requires much more than the ability or

knowledge of how to read and write. Students have the opportunity to broaden how they think of literacy and its effects through active discussion of literacy practices and their significance in students' lives.

2. Activity and discussion of "domains"

Once students have compiled a list of literacy events, these events can be separated into domains. Teachers then provide students with example domains like home and school or the workplace. Because some of the literacy events listed by students no doubt occur in multiple settings, such as emails being sent to friends or to administrators, students will see how the boundaries between domains are at times porous, and it is the rhetorical situation of the email that influences its purpose, content, and tone. Students can also generate lists of other domains to show the many locations where reading, writing, and all of the knowledge that goes along with it has a place in their lives and constructs how their identity is asserted by themselves and perceived by others.

3. Activity and discussion of "sponsors"

After a few activities and discussions of literacies and their domains, students will have a stronger understanding of literacy as a social act. To highlight the importance of people when it comes to developing literacy, students can consider the sponsors, "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy – and gain

advantage by it in some way" (Brandt *Literacy* 19). This definition of "sponsors" is broad, offering students a variety of ways for considering how people have influenced their use of literacy. A number of activities are options to help students consider who the participants in the literacy events are and what sponsors have played a role.

Continuing working with the lists students have made of the literacy events and domains, teachers have a basis for asking students to choose literacy events from different domains and describe the sponsors who have affected their use of literacy. Discussing the significance of *how* and *why* these sponsors have acted in ways that have affected students can demonstrate the importance of sponsors as well as the variety of people, places, and events that shape students' identities. Another activity for students is brainstorming some of the most important literacy sponsors from their pasts and drawing a literacy timeline that situates sponsors at particular time periods in the student's life.

If the literacy narratives models for the course have a specific theme or focus on a particular discipline, teachers then transition from a broad look at literacy to a more focused look at events and sponsors within formal education or a specific discipline. That is, if students are going to read a literacy narrative of a mathematician within a WID course, they might discuss literacy events that have led them to enter the field of mathematics as well as literacy events that have recently occurred or are occurring with regard to their area of study. Whether brainstorming literacy events, domains, and sponsors within or outside of formal education, students can begin to see the many places, people, and events that relate to literacy in their lives. As a result,

students will expand their view of literacy as a social act in a way that prepares them for an in-depth discussion and analysis of a literacy narrative that is read for the course.

4. Discussion of “Basic Elements of Literacy” table and guided application of the elements to a text

Mary Hamilton’s “Basic Elements of Literacy” table provides an apparatus for students to use the language they have learned through discussions of literacy, domains, and sponsors in order to analyze aspects of a given literacy event. Hamilton lists “Participants,” “Setting,” “Artifacts,” and “Activities” as areas to look closely at when discussing a literacy event. With a short reading of a literacy event, a teacher can guide students through this list of literacy elements, encouraging discussion of the different elements, how the elements can be seen within the narrative, and what the significance of each element is. Going through a model in class provides students with the opportunity to ask questions, consider ideas from peers, and contribute to a conversation about literacy in context. After using the table to examine a model, students then may choose one specific literacy event from their own list and look at that particular event in-depth using Hamilton's table.

5. Small groups reading literacy narratives and applying the table to the narratives

After going through the example literacy narrative together, students working individually or in groups, develop their understanding of literacy further by reading

literacy narratives, discussing them, and writing about the basic elements of literacy. Working in groups, students build upon their peers' ideas and perhaps recognize aspects of the literacy event or sponsors that they may not have considered working on their own. Practicing using the table as a starting point for analysis familiarizes students with the main elements that will be included in their own literacy narratives.

6. Activity for generating literacy narrative content and writing the literacy narrative

The type of literacy narrative teachers assign may differ based upon the course. However, the "Basic Literacy Elements" table can be a starting point for students generating content regardless of the course. Students can ask themselves, "What is the setting for this particular event in my life? Who participated in the event? What are the 'artifacts' or material conditions of this event? What activities are involved, and who is included or excluded?" By listing ideas first in the table, students can generate the content of their narrative including significant details that, when put into the narrative, will help their audience understand the importance of the literacy events described in the narrative. As students have already been readers of narratives, this assignment leads them to consider their own experiences as readers of other writers' stories in order to figure out how best to express their own experience.

Considering the new genre they are writing in, students will no doubt look to the examples discussed in class as models for their own writing. Having a variety of models is particularly useful here, so that students can see that narratives can be told in a variety of ways, with varying starting points, perspectives, and emphases on

particular features of the literacy events. As students craft their narratives, they can take the information from the table of basic literacy elements and create full descriptions of what occurred, being sure to note the specific details they listed as important and significant parts of the experience.

7. Peer Review

After students have drafted their literacy narratives, peer review can be a valuable activity for feedback and encouragement from peers. This could also be combined with feedback or a conference with the instructor in order to build on students' content and draw attention to aspects of the narrative in order to meet any specific assignment requirements. During peer review, students can use the "Basic Elements of Literacy" table to give feedback on what elements are working particularly well in the narrative and where their peers could use more information, detail, or clarification. This serves as a starting point for conversations between peers, as they can first talk about the table and then continue to discuss any issues the writers is concerned about or strategies for the writer to develop the narrative and make it stronger stylistically.

Developing Pedagogy

The scaffolding activities and discussions I've suggested are just a few examples of how literacy narratives could be taught within classrooms across the curriculum. Because these contexts for examining literacy events new, pedagogy

could no doubt be developed further when teachers gain familiarity with the genre of literacy narratives and with the challenges of teaching the genre within specific courses. With increased scholarship on literacy narratives within first-year seminars, introductory courses to the major, and WID courses, a more thorough and effective pedagogy could be developed, building upon the theory of New Literacy Studies to include other discipline-specific theories that are relevant to students developing professional identities within their fields.

Example Literacy Narratives in the Disciplines

The three books I will discuss here are examples of literacy narratives that could be used in the disciplines to help students think more deeply about literacy and the professional identities that develop as a result of participating within discourse communities. With examples from across the disciplines, I hope to illustrate the potential for engaging students from a variety of majors in discussions and critical thinking about the ways literacy affects their paths to their majors and how they understand the ways of thinking, evaluating, and communicating that define their disciplines. By using some of the language of New Literacy Studies combined with Mary Hamilton's basic elements of literacy events and practices, I will show the rich discussions available to students and teachers who are not familiar with the genre of literacy narratives or the field of literacy studies. While literacy events are described throughout these books, I will focus on one or two specific sections or moments within each book in order to demonstrate, briefly, the ways each author provides

readers with valuable information about the literacy practices and events that have been important to them as professionals within their disciplines. In each case, I will look at Hamilton's four basic elements of literacy events and practices (participants, setting, artifacts, and activities) in order to discuss how literacy plays an important role in these authors' narratives.

The first two literacy narratives, *Wait Till Next Year* by Doris Kearns Goodwin and *Deep Blue Home: An Intimate Ecology of Our Wild Ocean* by Julia Whitty are both written for the general public. *Wait Till Next Year* was a national bestseller, appealing to a broad audience with Goodwin's personal narrative tied to the history of the Brooklyn Dodgers and interwoven with historical events such as the Rosenberg trial, McCarthyism, and the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School. Whitty also writes to a public audience, combining her personal studies in ecology and her ocean travels as an entry into discussion of the unsustainable practices that contribute to ocean damage. The third literacy narrative, *I Want to be a Mathematician: An Automathography* by Paul R. Halmos, is more specialized than the other two, chronicling Halmos's career as a mathematician while simultaneously describing research developments within his field. Each author uses the literacy practices of their discipline in unique ways, contextualizing the nature of their experiences and demonstrating an understanding of the diverse ways literacy plays a significant role in their careers and participation in their discipline.

***Wait Till Next Year* by Doris Kearns Goodwin**

Doris Kearns Goodwin is a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian best known for her biographies of presidents, including Lyndon B. Johnson and Theodore Roosevelt, and who specializes in presidential history. In her autobiography, *Wait Till Next Year,* Goodwin describes her life growing up in 1950's Brooklyn as an avid baseball fan. Goodwin's family was very important to her, influencing who she is as a historian, a writer, and a professional. In *Wait Till Next Year*, Goodwin describe in detail her experiences that contributed to her path toward these goals.

What is unique about Goodwin's story is that she applies the literacy tools of her trade to telling her narrative. That is, she uses the knowledge she has gained from decades of research, interviewing, and writing as a historian to craft a narrative of her own childhood. Goodwin writes,

> [I]t would be necessary to summon to my own history the tools I had acquired in investigating the history of others. I would look for evidence, not simply to confirm my own memory, but to stimulate it and to provide a larger context for my childhood adventures. Thus I sought out the companions of my youth, finding almost everyone who lived on my block, people I hadn't seen in three or four decades. I explored the streets and shops in which I had spent my days, searching the Rockville Centre archives, and read the local newspapers from the fifties. From all this—from my own memory and the extended memory of others, from old pamphlets, documents, yearbooks, and picture albums—I have tried to recreate the life of a young girl growing up in a very special time and circumstance. (11)

By subjecting her own memories to the same scrutiny and detailed evaluation that she uses as a historian, Goodwin begins to construct the narrative of her childhood. Conscious that she must appeal to a broader audience than only those who know her,

Goodwin considers the time she grew up in, the city, the neighborhood, and the experiences of others to recreate this "special time and circumstance" that she hopes will appeal to readers (11). This initial description of Goodwin's narrative is important, providing students of history with the opportunity to see what Goodwin, a professional historian, considers strong practices for investigating and describing a historical place and time.

The literacy practices Goodwin describes include finding evidence, reading newspapers, tracking down former neighbors and friends, interviewing, and recording the details of the time in a way that she knows will appeal to an audience looking to see the broader significance of her childhood situated in historical context (11). These practices do not encompass the full work of a historian, but they indicate what is valued in the profession—verifying recollections, finding supporting documents, communicating with a range of people who can provide information from varying viewpoints, and conveying historical information in an accessible and interesting way to an audience that includes non-historians. This view into Goodwin's processes in telling her own story provides a strong starting point for the narrative of her childhood which includes some of the literacy practices that led to her career.

In chapter one of *Wait Till Next Year,* Goodwin describes particularly important moments she spends with her mother and father—moments that define to some extent how she views the world and her desire to connect with people through language and shared interests. Though the passage I describe here is primarily situated in six pages, 13-19, Goodwin uses her experiences with baseball and literacy

throughout the entire book to connect her readers to the time period and her experiences in New York. In chapter one, Goodwin describes her father teaching her how to keep score of baseball games that she listens to on the radio. Goodwin writes,

> Night after night he taught me the odd collection of symbols, numbers, and letters that enable a baseball lover to record every action of the game…By the time I had mastered the art of scorekeeping, a lasting bond had been forged among my father, baseball, and me. (13)

Scorekeeping, which involved learning a new language for translating hits, stolen bases, runs, etc. into a small red scorebook provided Goodwin with access to a community of baseball fans as well as a stronger relationship with her father. She describes how each night after dinner, she would "eagerly launch into [her] narrative of every play, and almost every pitch, of the afternoon's contest" (Goodwin 15). While her father listened, Goodwin learned "the power of narrative, which would introduce a lifetime of storytelling" (15). Telling more and more stories, Goodwin learned strategies for making a compelling story such as building momentum in the narrative, drawing upon details to create suspense and emotion, and saving the final score until the end of her story (16). Goodwin describes "recounting…the Dodgers' progress" as her "first lessons in narrative art," where her scorebook's symbols allow her to retell "the tale of an entire game" to her father (15). Though her father could have opened the paper at any time and found out the scores to the game, Goodwin believed that her "father would never have been able to follow the Dodgers the proper way, day by day, play by play, inning by inning" (18).

Within this story of learning to keep score, Goodwin integrates the history of the Dodgers, highlighting important World Series, dramatic sport tragedies, and victories like that of Jackie Robinson becoming a hero to children. After her first game at Ebbets Field, Goodwin and her father use her scorebook to recount the game over ice cream. And while she still remembers the details of that game, Goodwin writes, "What I remember most is sitting at Ebbets Field for the first time, with my red scorebook on my lap and my father at my side" (50).

The **participants** in the literacy event are easy to find. Goodwin and her father are the key participants. Goodwin's father teachers her the new language of baseball, of keeping score, and of recounting the game. Her father is a sponsor of literacy in this sense, and he provides Goodwin with the tools necessary to use writing and storytelling in order to describe a complicated game in a way that would engage him and, ultimately, engage others as well. The participants of this literacy event carry beyond just Goodwin and her father, however. Goodwin writes that the knowledge and love of baseball that she gained have been important throughout her career, because "almost everywhere, as [she] travel[s] the lecture circuit, [she] encounter[s] people less anxious to hear [her] tales of Lyndon Johnson, the Kennedys, or the Roosevelts than they [are] to share memories of those wondrous days when baseball almost ruled the world" (9). Through this shared discussion, Goodwin points out, everyone remembers their own history, from carefree childhoods to the fear of polio and atomic bombs (10). The act of scoring and storytelling has provided Goodwin with a lifetime of connections to other people—people who share the same literacy

practices of keeping track of scores, of reading newspapers about the games, and of recounting the memories of baseball to each other.

What is striking about the participants in this literacy narrative is that theirs is not an oppositional relationship. Goodwin is not in a power struggle with her father or struggling to overcome an obstacle. Instead, scorekeeping is an act of literacy that creates a lasting bond not only with her father, but with other baseball lovers and with the profession of historians. Goodwin finds the roots of her early interest in history and in storytelling at her childhood home.

The immediate **setting** of this event is Goodwin's own home and, later, Ebbet's field. Goodwin describes "sitting cross-legged before the squat Philco radio which stood as a permanent fixture on [her family's] porch" (14). She sits with her book in her lap, and at times, when the intense energy of the game is too much, takes a lap around the block (14). The **domain** of the home and the sporting arena situate Goodwin within an atmosphere of closeness, shared values, and camaraderie. These domains, while at times contentious in other literacy narratives are sites of joy and close relationships in Goodwin's narrative. The domain of work becomes a new site where this literacy practice crosses over, as Goodwin, through her knowledge and love of baseball, forms connection with historians, with readers of her books, and with people who attend her lectures.

The **artifacts** involved in this literacy event are both overt and hidden. Overt artifacts could include things like the scorebook Goodwin records the scores in; the newspapers that contribute to her recollections; the photographs that she has from this

period of time; even the books that Goodwin has written since and the lectures she has delivered as a writer, professor, and historian. Artifacts that are not as overt include the values associated with the game of baseball and the ways of thinking that influence the practice. For example, Goodwin felt that her father could not experience the game of baseball "the proper way, day by day, play by play, inning by inning" with the excitement and involvement that the game warrants from its fans (18). The notion that there is a "proper way" to follow baseball is a value and way of thinking about the sport that hinges upon fan devotion and community involvement. The exultant feeling when the team wins, the connections Goodwin makes with fellow fans, and the knowledge of Dodgers' history create the identity of a "real" fan who will share their memories and stories of wins and losses experienced along with the team.

The **activities** in the literacy event of scorekeeping at first begin with education and Goodwin learning the language of symbols needed to record each run, bat, walk, error, etc. Her father guides her, and his questions about the game such as how many hits a particular batter had or how many strikeouts a pitcher threw contribute to her growing understanding of scoring and of the game (16). The literacy practice evolves then to include storytelling after every game with Goodwin uses the score book to guide her detailed narrative that will engage her audience, her father. This routine is important to her as a child and to her father who does not waver in listening to her story every evening and developing a bond with his daughter through their regular practice of sitting down after dinner to discuss the game.

In order to understand their conversation, a person would need to understand the game of baseball, its rules, the players, and the options for scoring. Through Goodwin and her father's storytelling is a closed practice that includes only them, there is a sense of a much broader group of people who can engage in this activity and who would fully understand a person's desire to retell an exciting game. Goodwin sees these same kinds of activities later in life when she hears friends and strangers recount stories of sporting events, all the while framing these events within historical and social contexts.

What may seem upon first read like a simple way for a father to spend time with his daughter, when viewed as a literacy event, is very complex. The skills, values, knowledge, and meaning behind the act of scorekeeping are important to Goodwin both as a child and as an adult who has developed a professional identity that incorporates the literacy practices of her childhood. Students reading this narrative would probably find it easy to point to the explicit participants, setting, artifacts, and activities involved. Looking closely at the events, however, students can see the other people involved in the literacy practices. Goodwin's experiences are informed by the mythos of baseball; by the great players like Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play major league baseball; and by the narratives of past games Goodwin did not see but that are narrated to her by older fans. The act of scorekeeping, small though it seems, leads to a career for Goodwin and a commitment to telling the stories of other people and to describing history in an engaging way for readers and listeners.

Students in first-year seminars or introductory courses to their major who worry about their past education or their abilities as college students may find a story like Goodwin's very appealing. Goodwin's narrative describes literacy outside of formal education, not only pointing to the importance of these family-oriented and fun events, but describing these experiences as vital parts of what forged Goodwin's interests, her character, and her future work as a historian. Literacy practices gained from family, friends, and community are just as important to Goodwin's narrative as those practices learned with formal education. Reflecting upon their own literacy practices, students may find that they, too, have been influenced by the many experiences they have had with literacy outside of formal education—experiences they may not have even considered important prior to thinking about them from the viewpoint of New Literacy Studies.

Within a WID course, this literacy narrative provides opportunities for students to get a sense of how a historian applies their craft in a way that is both personal and professional. Goodwin's frame of her childhood story as one that has been put through the rigorous research process she applies when conducting historical research demonstrates her understanding of and commitment to literacy practices within her field. By reading newspapers, interviewing old friends and neighbors, looking at photographs of her neighborhood and comparing them to the area now, and relying upon outside sources of information to inform her memories, Goodwin demonstrates the importance of a variety of voices from a historical standpoint. She cannot create the narrative on her own. Her story is one embedded in a history and culture that is

informed by the many literacy artifacts that remain for her to access, evaluate, and use to provide richness to her narrative. Her narrative demonstrates not only the importance of history, but the importance of the practices used to relate history to other people—practices that when used effectively can create a strong narrative with historical content and personal appeal.

Students within a WID course for history could benefit from reading Goodwin's literacy narrative and also from applying the same rigorous research to their own lives. In crafting a literacy narrative of how they entered the field of history, students could talk to family and friends, conduct interviews, look at newspapers from their childhood, and think critically about the literacy practices that connect them to larger communities, similarly to how Goodwin is connected to communities like New Yorkers, baseball fans, and people who are passionate about presidential history. In doing so, students may find that there are complex literacy practices that have informed and still inform their interests within the field.

Wait Till Next Year is a literacy narrative that combines a personal story with a historical perspective that demonstrates the importance of the 1950s in United States history and the importance of the history of baseball to a little girl who would one day use her storytelling abilities to recreate history for readers and listeners. Goodwin's story is easy to read and accessible to historians and non-historians alike. Though it is easy to read, *Wait Till Next Year* offers rich opportunities for students to consider how their literacy practices outside of education have shaped their academic paths and the professional identities they are developing in the field of history.

***Deep Blue Home: An Intimate Ecology of Our Wild Ocean* by Julia Whitty**

Julia Whitty has spent her life traveling the world, exploring the oceans and making documentary films. Her study of ocean ecology and human influence on the sea has led her to write several books on the relationship between humans and the ocean. *Deep Blue Home* chronicles Whitty's research on Isla Rasa, an island in the Gulf of California. Her book is separated into three parts, each describing a different area of the ocean and her growing understanding of the ecological problems caused by a lack of equilibrium between humans and oceanic life. The first part of *Deep Blue Home* provides a look at Whitty as a novice scientist, studying avian life on the remote Isla Rasa. Though the section I will discuss is, in its entirety, 84 pages, there are individual literacy events that range anywhere from one paragraph to a few pages that readers could examine. The main literacy event I will discuss occurs on one page in the narrative, page 45.

In Part I, “Isla Rasa,” Whitty describes her initial career in science prior to becoming a filmmaker, diver, and writer. Her journey begins in 1980 at Isla Rasa, an island in the Gulf of California where “some 95 percent of the world’s population of Heermann’s gulls breed” (Whitty 9). Whitty says that “when [she] first visited the Gulf of California, the human population was so scarce and the wildlife so abundant and tame that many referred to this remarkable body of water and its archipelagoes as the *other* Galapagos” (18). Through her narrative, Whitty describes how the Colorado River used to “transport countless cubic miles of pulverized rock downstream in seasonal blooms of silt,” but after a dam was built in 1907, followed by even more

dams over the next 70 years, "today not a drop of Colorado River water reaches the Gulf of California…Consequently, this corner of the deep blue home, once a hotbed of biodiversity and prolific natural experimentation, grows simpler, quieter, and less alive" (19).

Studying this decline in ocean life, Whitty lives on Isla Rasa with two other scientists, Enriqueta and Mónica, both of whom are experienced researchers. The three women record information about the avian life on Isla Rasa during the breeding season, studying the loss of biodiversity and beginning to "see in another language" as they become more familiar with the birds' different kinds of intelligence, hunting, and survival techniques (Whitty 37). Whitty describes her life with the other two scientists:

> Enriqueta, Mónica and I find our place in the flow, jettisoning scholarly physiques and congested brains. The island sucks the other world out of us. My journal records our transformation to brown outdoorswomen with burgeoning amnesia and muscular questions ranging well beyond science. We shed our prior lives swiftly but for a strange smattering of technology. (39)

Though Whitty and her peers "shed [their] scholarly physiques," they do not entirely shed their professional personas while they study life on and around Isla Rasa. While studying, the women advocate for the life that still remains there, struggling to protect the island from human interference while disagreeing at times on the most sustainable methods for their study. Whitty lyrically describes her growing understanding of the island and its inhabitants, paralleling her experiences with stories from sacred texts and with the ecological history of the island. In doing so, Whitty portrays her own

literacy practices of learning a new way to think, to understand, and to represent, through language, the relationship she develops as a person intimately tied to the ecological history of this important island. Whitty develops her skills as a scientist while simultaneously transforming into an individual who is deeply aware of the ongoing loss of life that is at the heart of many ecological studies.

After a particularly bad storm on Isla Rasa, the three women survey the damage on the island. Whitty describes the scientists' work following the storm:

> Over the coming days we find mangled dead seabirds all over the island, necks broken, wings broken, legs broken. Because we're preparing bird skins, we bring these victims back to the *casita.* Beneath their soft feathers and skin, the glistening muscle fibers that powered their flight are blackened with bruises. In the world on the other side of the tropic of civilization, people assume that for birds the wind is a benevolent ally. But those of us at work in the deserted sea understand that birds are sailors too, their boats painfully vulnerable to wind swells, wind troughs, rogue air waves, rip air tides, and atmospheric tsunamis…We dismantle their limp carcasses with scalpels and refill their empty skins with gauze, heaping the innards in pyramids of shiny purple and red organs as pretty as multicolored beans…We see the causes of their deaths (the broken bones), the causes of what could have been their deaths (the tumors), the symptoms of their dying (the empty stomachs), the mysteries of their seemingly excellent health. Like pathologists, we live with their inner stories day after day, absorbing their lives and deaths through the whorl of our fingerprints. (45)

In this passage, Whitty learns to "read" the birds' lives and deaths both through her scientific work, collecting the bird bodies and preparing them for research, and through her concern for the "sailors" vulnerable to the uncontrollable weather.

The **participants** in this scene are Whitty, Enriqueta, and Mónica, referred to as "we" by Whitty, rather than "I." The first person plural situates Whitty as a member of a close-knit community on the island, all affected by the loss of so many birds. This "we" extends as the passage progresses, including hidden participants. Whitty points out that "[i]n the world on the other side of the tropic of civilization, people assume that for birds the wind is a benevolent ally. But those of us at work in the deserted sea understand that birds are sailors too" (45). Here, the participants become those who promulgate the myth of a solely beneficial relationship between birds and the air as well as "those of us at work in the deserted sea," which may include Whitty and her companions or other scientists who work on the sea, far from the reaches of civilization, but working on behalf of all people by virtue of the complex, interdependent relationship between humans and ocean life. Other hidden participants include the sponsors of Whitty's literacy who have helped to mold her understanding of the importance of studying life in its various locations.

The **setting** of this literacy practice is at the heart of Whitty's narrative. She and her companions are the sole human inhabitants of Isla Rasa, and their immediate surroundings include a damaged island strewn with bird bodies. As they begin their work, Whitty describes only the birds themselves and the actions of the scientists, highlighting what must be done in order to be brought "closer to [their] fellows on th[e] island" (45). The **domain** of this setting is a mixture of home and work. Unlike many narratives which separate these locations, for Whitty, the small island is both home and work. There is no separation between the two; this is seen when the storm

comes and Whitty and her colleagues must stagger out into the storm to secure the antenna that provides what little communication they have to the outside world (44). After collection of the bird bodies, the three women "bring these victims back to the *casita*" (Whitty 45). Whitty and her companions do not take the birds to a laboratory set up for their work; they take the birds to their shared home. By combining work and home domains in this way, Whitty emphasizes the interconnected nature of the work that is being done with the personal lives of human beings. The social purpose behind their home on the island is the work being done there. The study of oceanic and avian life informs their relationships with each other, their respect for the island's inhabitants, and their fierce desire to protect the island in what ways they can.

The visible **artifacts** involved in this literacy practice are birds, scalpels, skins, gauze, innards, the journal Whitty recorded her reflections in prior to writing *Deep Blue Home,* as well as the book itself. The first artifacts are those of the work of scientists. It is through the scalpels and gauze that Whitty, Enriqueta, and Mónica prepare the bird skins so that the birds can be studied, from broken bones and bruised muscles that can be easily seen to the innards that must be made visible in order to study them. Over the course of days studying the dead birds, the scientists "live with [the birds'] inner stories…absorbing their lives and deaths through the whorls of [their] fingertips" (45). This literacy practice is a hands-on one, requiring the active involvement of the participants while they construct stories of the lives of birds, finding and recording information about the birds' causes of death, possible causes of deaths, and the symptoms of those deaths (Whitty 45).

While relatively few visible artifacts or resources are described in detail within this passage, there are many hidden artifacts. There is a basic level of skill and knowledge of how to prepare bird skins and then the more complex knowledge of how to interpret the feathers, skin, muscles, and organs that can be read for the story of avian life. Other artifacts include the researchers' shared values and the "understand[ing] that birds are sailors too" (Whitty 45). Whitty notes, not all share the understanding that they do; people "on the other side of the tropic of civilization" assume a continually-harmonious relationship between the birds and the air (45). They do not have the disciplinary *or* the personal knowledge that is paired within the domains of work and home on Isla Rasa. The willingness to work so intimately with the life on and around Isla Rasa comes from non-material values associated with the scientific work being done. The women stand to benefit from their work insomuch as their research provides others with knowledge about the breeding habits of the life on Isla Rasa as well as the decline in biodiversity in the area due to human interference. One of the main artifacts of this literacy practice that is not visible, then, is the commitment to sustainability that drives the scientists' work and way of understanding and interpreting the stories from the "dismantle[d] limp carcasses" (45).

Studying these birds and constructing their stories is the main **activity** described in Whitty's passage. While preparing the bird skins might easily be learned by a non-scientist, how to gather, record, and interpret the findings from the dead birds is facilitated by the disciplinary knowledge that the researchers have brought with them to Isla Rasa and that Whitty, the novice in her group, is developing throughout

her narrative. In the field of ecology, there are scientific methods and practices that define the activities of preserving and studying specimens. Though these practices are clearly disciplinary, they are also very personal. Whitty and her fellow scientists have been through the same storm as the birds and have had their own home damaged. They then "live with [the] inner stories" of the birds, "absorbing their lives and deaths" in a way that Whitty doesn't believe the rest of the world can fully understand (45). The activity of writing *Deep Blue Home* is an example of how Whitty attempts to bring that understanding to people who have not experienced the events on Isla Rasa but who are nevertheless connected to the biodiversity of the ocean in very real ways.

Deep Blue Home is a book that could be read in a variety of courses, both within the disciplines and outside of them. In an interdisciplinary first-year seminar, passages from this book could be used to discuss ecology, sustainability, documentary filmmaking, or even ethics. Whitty's book is very accessible and can be read in parts or as a whole. Because each section of the book describes a different locale and situation for Whitty, teachers have a variety of passages to choose from that show Whitty engaging in literacy practices that define her identity as a researcher, filmmaker, and concerned citizen. The model that *Deep Blue Home* provides could be valuable for teachers who hope to show students how they can connect acts of literacy to social issues that are widely-experienced *and* deeply personal.

A literacy narrative written in a similar way to Whitty's within a first-year seminar could begin with students identifying literacy practices that are tied to social issues. For example, students might consider literacy in their own lives and how that

literacy relates to issues like sustainability, poverty, civil rights, health, or violence. As students begin to see how literacy practices are social and connected to a variety of issues that are relevant to their lives, they could craft a literacy narrative similar to Whitty's, foregrounding the social issue while also describing how they came to "read" real-life situations and to understand and use language that would allow them to better understand that issue as a member of a community.

In WID courses, *Deep Blue Home* could demonstrate the fieldwork done by scientists and the tools, practices, and language that are associated with that work. For example, each time Whitty describes a species she encounters, she includes its scientific classification and the degree to which the species is at risk or endangered. She includes descriptions of the life on Rasa, the routines and instincts of the avian life, and information about how each of the species is connected to the others, as a decline in one species can lead to decreased biodiversity on a large scale. The language of science is used throughout *Deep Blue Home,* while the languages of sacred texts and of human experience are also highlighted. Whitty's narrative provides a unique perspective, demonstrating how a person can be a professional who is personally involved in their work, allowing it to change how they view the world, their work as a professional, and themselves.

On Isla Rasa, Whitty's understanding of herself and her work develops from her early position of novice to an expert who has opinions on how best to perform research with a minimal amount of interference. However, even as a novice, Whitty has shared stakes and values that make her consubstantial with her fellow scientists,

just as students who are beginning to learn about their discipline share interests, values, and ways of thinking that contribute to their developing identities as members of a discipline. Students who read Whitty's narrative have the chance to see the process of a novice developing a language for speaking about experiences that exist in multiple domains. In addition, the narrative has details that allow readers to see the value of being a novice—of recording observations, making mistakes, asking questions, and coming to understand the meaning behind activities within a discipline.

Because Whitty is portraying a discipline that has strong ties to many communities that are affected by changes within the ocean, *Deep Blue Home* can also serve a strong example for students who may one day write to a broad audience in an attempt to help lay people understand complex, yet very important, ideas from their disciplines. The stakes of communicating effectively with a broad audience are high; readers can feel the importance of the issue, acting upon their growing understanding of this importance; or readers can feel like outsiders, uninterested in the language of the biological sciences which may be hard to understand and forge personal connections with. Students in a WID course could benefit from looking critically at the strategies Whitty uses for communicating this complex relationship between the oceans and humans to an audience that does not have her educational background or resources for personal experiences like hers on Isla Rasa. By carefully finding the literacy practices, participants, and activities, students can consider how literacy is connected to a personal understanding of social and biological issues.

Students crafting their own literacy narratives can, like Whitty, discuss personal and global issues, experimenting with finding ways to translate disciplinary language into language that is accessible, personal, and meaningful to an audience outside of the discipline. This difficult task provides students with a chance to reflect upon their own literacy experiences while also connecting with an audience that may not share the same knowledge, values, or interests that are common within the discipline.

These are just a few of the opportunities available through a text like Whitty's which is accessible enough for a lay person to read while also detailed and complex enough for someone within the field of biology or ecology to find a broad range of topics to discuss. Because Whitty's own literacy practices in translating her experiences for a broad audience are varied and complex, a literacy narrative like this one could be located in a variety of classrooms within the university. *Deep Blue Home* provides students with the chance to interact with writing that is both grounded in disciplinary practices while also being creative in ways that make serious issues compelling and personal, even to readers who may have never seriously considered their own connection to the ocean and its inhabitants.

***I Want to Be a Mathematician: An Automathography* by Paul R. Halmos**

Paul R. Halmos's automathography, *I Want to Be a Mathematician*, chronicles his school experiences and his career as a mathematician. This book differs from Goodwin and Whitty's literacy narratives which are very personal accounts in that

Halmos focuses not on his personal life, but on his professional life as a student and mathematician. Halmos divides his narrative into three parts: "Student," "Scholar," and "Senior." In the first section, Halmos describes his academic career at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, from his freshman year through graduate school, followed by his early work teaching at Syracuse. The second section guides readers through Halmos's fourteen years teaching at the University of Chicago. Through his various work experiences, publications, and research, Halmos illustrates his growing understanding of universities from a faculty perspective. In the final portion of *I Want to Be a Mathematician,* Halmos describes the latter portion of his career. What is unique about this section is that Halmos takes on a more expert stance than in earlier sections, imparting advice to readers and including chapters that often begin with "How to," such as "How to write mathematics," "How to advise," "How to be a mathematician," and "How to supervise." In "Paul Halmos: In His Own Words," John Ewig, executive director of the American Mathematical Society, introduces Halmos to readers:

> [Halmos] was a master of mathematics in multiple ways, and he influenced mathematicians and mathematical culture throughout his career. Unlike most other master mathematicians, Paul's legacy was not merely mathematics but rather advice and opinion about mathematical life—writing, publishing, speaking, research, or even thinking about mathematics. Paul wrote about each of these topics with an extraordinary mixture of conviction and humility. Mathematicians paid attention to what he wrote, and they often quoted it (and still do—"every talk ought to have one proof")… Paul Halmos's writing affected the professional lives of nearly every mathematician in the latter half of the twentieth century. (1136)

Halmos's automathography provides his advice and opinion on mathematics, guiding readers through his process of entering into the discipline of mathematics while also providing a historical view of mathematics in the latter half of the 20th century.

Chapter Four of Part I of *I Want to Be a Mathematician* is entitled "Learning to Study." This chapter is 23 pages long (pages 50-73), and in it, Halmos puts forth advice and a variety of strategies for students learning how to study math. Though this chapter contains a number of interesting literacy practices, I've chosen one passage and literacy practice from pages 69-71 to discuss in-depth. In "Learning to Study," Halmos describes some of his own approaches to studying mathematics and his suspicion that "the same sort of thing works for everyone" when studying math (69). Though Halmos's claim is that the same thing works for everyone, he provides an example of a personal approach to studying—an approach that does not illustrate everyone using the same methods to study, but rather an individualized approach to engaging with mathematical concepts. Halmos uses a small seminar presentation as an example:

> I keep active as I read…by changing the notation; if there is nothing else I can do, I can at least change (improve?) the choice of letters. Some of my friends think that's silly, but it works for me. When I reported on Chapter VII of Stone's book (the chapter on multiplicity theory, a complicated subject) to a small seminar containing Ambrose and Doob, my listeners poked fun at me for having changed the letters, but I felt it helped me to keep my eye on the ball as I was trying to organize and systemize the material. I feel that the subtleties are less likely to escape me if I must concentrate on the brick and mortar as well as gape admiringly at the architecture. I choose letters (and other symbols) that I prefer to the ones the author chose, and, more importantly, choose the same ones throughout the subject, unifying the notation of the part of the literature I am studying…I believe that

> changing the notion of everything I read, to make it harmonious with my own, saves me time in the long run. If I can do it well, I don't have to waste time fitting each new paper on the subject into the notional scheme of things; I have already thought *that* through, and I can now go on to more important matters. Finally, a small point, but one with some psychological validity: as I keep changing the notation to my own, I get a feeling of being creative, tiny but non-zero—even before I understand what's going on, and long before I can generalize it, improve it, or apply it, I am already active, I am doing something. (69-70)

In this passage, Halmos describes his personal method for focusing his own attention—a method that helps him not only in the moment when he is studying, but later, as he builds upon his knowledge and uses the same notation "throughout the subject, unifying the notation" to create continuity between similar concepts within one subject area (70). Within this chapter, Halmos also describes his other methods for studying, including how he takes notes at lectures or how a student can benefit from going both to good and bad colloquium talks. Even within a bad event, Halmos argues, you can learn or glean one small thing from the talk that will be useful to you (70-72). When focusing on how a student can study mathematics, Halmos consistently points to active engagement with new ideas and concepts that will lead to understanding and future application. Halmos's notation change provides an interesting look at how a simple literacy act can have larger implications for learning.

Within Halmos's discussion of changing notation, the overt **participants** are primarily Halmos, his audience at the seminar, including fellow mathematicians Ambrose and Deeb, and Stone who has written the materials Halmos is studying. The visible participants in this literacy event are primarily academics. Because his own

method of creating continuity between notations is based upon how he conceives of mathematical concepts, the unseen participants in this literacy event extend to those teachers who influenced Halmos's understanding of mathematics and of symbols as representative of particular concepts or mathematical procedures. In addition, as Halmos is imparting advice to others who may be studying mathematics, unseen participants include the readers of his advice—any people, academic or otherwise, who are working individually to understand a particular concept.

The **setting** of this event includes the small seminar to which Halmos was presenting at the University of Illinois; however, other settings might include situations wherein Halmos is studying or preparing to study by becoming actively involved with materials through changes in notation. Halmos's description of the seminar setting is brief, pointing to a situation wherein changes in notation were particularly useful “when [he] reported on Chapter VII of Stone’s book (the chapter on multiplicity theory, a complicated subject) to a small seminar” and changing the notation “helped [him] to keep [his] eye on the ball as [he] was trying to organize and systemize the material” (69-70). This setting does not provide much detail for readers, possibly due to the fact that Halmos is describing how he deals with abstract concepts and uses symbols to describe them. His involvement is not so much dependent upon the materials of the event as it is upon his psychological and intellectual engagement with the material. Because of this, the **domains** of practice in which this literacy event occurs are more important than the overt setting and details of the building, room, or surroundings that influenced Halmos at the time of the presentation.

Halmos's literacy practice of changing notation is clearly situated within the discipline of mathematics as well as within his personal life as he finds his own methods for focusing and engaging with material. The primary domains here would be school and work because Halmos's notation changes contribute to his involvement within the discipline as a student, as a peer presenting to others, and as an instructor within the university. Situated within the small seminar, Halmos's audience is those who will understand Stone's work on multiplicity theory, narrowing the domain of this particular event to formal education. However, Halmos's studying of mathematics may occur in other settings or with goals that exist outside of the domain of school or work. For example, changing notation may be part of personal investigation of a subject—a self-sponsored act of literacy rather than one distinctly tied to a particular setting like a seminar or classroom. The need to keep track of concepts through consistent notation is important both within the public and private spheres; Halmos uses this practice in private where it is useful only to him and in public where he must take into account his audience of academics.

There are few physical **artifacts** in this situation beyond the Stone book Halmos references and Halmos's own writing materials. However, many other resources are used within this situation, such as Halmo's values and his knowledge of himself and of mathematics. Halmos's understanding of math—or at times lack of understanding—is an important part of his change in notation. This literacy practices is used regardless of whether Halmos fully understands the concepts or if he is struggling to understand and feels that "if there is nothing else [he] can do, [he] can at

least change…the choice of letters" (69). The notation change facilitates understanding, and Halmos finds that eventually it "saves [him] time in the long run" (70). Because Halmos has already established his own notation with which he is familiar, he does not have to reorient his thinking to a new notation each time he reads about an unfamiliar concept. Halmos's awareness of the notation that works for him helps him personally to "organize and systemize the material" he is discussing in the small seminar (70).

Engagement with the material is one non-visible artifact that Halmos spends more time explaining than his seminar presentation. Halmos notes that he "get[s] a feeling of being creative" when he changes notation (70). While Halmos acknowledges that this is a small feeling—"tiny but non-zero"—he also emphasizes its importance, saying that before he even fully understands the concepts he is working with, "before [he] understand what's going on, and long before [he] can generalize it, improve it, or apply it, [he is] already active, [he] is doing something" (70). The non-visible artifacts of this literacy practice include Halmos valuing the creative aspect of his work and mathematics as a field in which—like most fields—a student begins as a novice, growing comfortable and skilled at dealing with not fully understanding all concepts after initially reading about them. The way that Halmos positions himself as a participant within his study before he fully understands and applies concept is also a non-visible artifact that contributes to his success, allowing him to become involved in his own learning quickly, even when he is only beginning to understand a concept.

The **activities** in this literacy practice are the many levels of studying, from beginning to consider a mathematical concept to fully understanding and applying that concept, as well as Halmos's presentation of his work at a seminar. The activity of changing notation is part of each level, with Halmos first fitting the notation into his own familiar "notational scheme" and then using this method to focus his attention while gaining familiarity with and understanding of the new material (70). When Halmos is presenting on Stone's multiplicity theory at the small seminar, he uses the same notation so that he can "gape admiringly at the architecture" rather than having to "concentrate on the bricks and mortar" (70). In that way, this activity prioritizes Halmos's thought processes, so he can pay attention to larger concepts rather than having to keep track of notation that differs from his own. This activity unifies Halmos's previous disciplinary knowledge with the knowledge he acquires while he studies. Because Halmos presents his materials on Stone's chapter to his peers, the activity is one of involvement not only with mathematical concepts, but with the public as well. In this way, the changes in notation are a practice that aids in clear communication with Halmos's peers who, as seen through their poking fun at his changes in notation, have other methods for studying that are specific to their own needs while also being based upon their previous literacy experiences with mathematics.

The non-visible activities are the structured routines that are part of Halmos's process and the ways that mathematics is regulated in the academic domain. Halmos puts forth changes in notation as a personal system that he uses but that is an option

for others who are studying and wish to involve themselves actively in the process, even if they do not yet fully understand what they are studying. However, the level of disciplinary knowledge involved in Halmos's presentation on Stone in particular requires more than basic disciplinary knowledge, and the amount of knowledge a person has about mathematics determines whether or not they can actively participate in this particular literacy event. Without the disciplinary knowledge and understanding of Stone's multiplicity theory and Halmos's discussion, a common observer or a student early in their undergraduate career may find themselves feeling like a novice or an outsider in this particular literacy event. Since the seminar is used as an example of when the literacy practice of changing notations is particularly useful, however, Halmos provides a more open look at mathematics—where people of all levels of understanding can benefit from his advice as a professional who has learned how to engage with difficult material while being intellectually active from start to finish.

This literacy narrative would be most useful within an introductory course to the major or a WID course. Halmos's description of this single act of changing notation demonstrates his values and his personalization of his engagement with mathematics—his path to finding strategies that will work for him while he engages with new concepts. For a student just entering the field of mathematics and taking an introductory course to the major, this would be a particularly strong chapter to use as a reading because Halmos offers many suggestions beyond changing notation for how students can maximize their experience studying mathematics. Since Halmos relates

his experiences as an incoming freshman to the University of Illinois all the way through graduate school and his subsequent career in mathematics, there is a wealth of information that could be useful to someone beginning to understand literacy practices within the university as well as within the mathematics discipline. Halmos's descriptions of choosing courses, registering for classes, enduring courses that bored him, enjoying those classes that caught his interest, and dealing with newfound social environments in the university illustrate many of the issues and literacy situations that students still face in universities today.

Students reading Halmos's narrative within an introductory course to the major could benefit from learning about Halmos's own literacy practices as well as taking a close look at how they have developed personal literacy practices that aid their them when studying new concepts. Students might ask "What do I do to focus on material? How do I unify my experience of dealing with concepts that are repeated within courses? What ways can I personalize how I study in order to make studying work for me?" By writing their own literacy narratives that look critically at the literacy practices that have worked or have failed for them when attempting to study mathematics, students who are entering that discipline could actively consider how they have approached mathematics in the past and how they could benefit from new literacy practices for dealing with increasingly complex concepts. Teachers could contribute to this discussion by pointing students to literacy practices they have seen work for others or that they personally use to make sense of new material. Through Halmos does not discuss gender as a factor in how a student learns mathematics, his

literacy narrative and others could open the class to discussion of this charged subject. Students then can learn about the variety of experiences students have had with mathematics while also acquainting themselves with the strategies other students have developed for effective study. Students then can construct personalized study methods and strategies for making connections between mathematical concepts in varying courses.

While many of Halmos's stories could be read by students early on as math majors, there are also a variety of stories that could be read by students in upper division courses, as Halmos often illustrates literacy in context within mathematics as a professional field. Halmos discusses many literacy practices within the discipline, including learning to write about mathematics, publishing research, and participating in disciplinary practices at the faculty level such as mentoring graduate students and developing pedagogical practices. Within WID courses, students could benefit from Halmos's ideas about explaining mathematical concepts in writing. In addition, the mathematical concepts that Halmos uses to contextualize his writing provide students with a range of disciplinary language and practices to discuss. With the guidance of teachers, students could come to a fuller understanding of how disciplinary language can be used to add complexity to discussions both within and outside of mathematics.

For example, in the first paragraph of *I Want to Be a Mathematician,* Halmos explains that he "like[s] words more than numbers," saying that "to [him] the definition of a group is far clearer and more important and more beautiful than the Cauchy integral formula" (3). While the average reader may not know the definition

of a group or understand the Cauchy integral formula, within the field of mathematics, someone who has taken undergraduate coursework would understand these references, and in doing so, add to their understanding of Halmos's preference for words to numbers. Understanding the mathematical concepts adds nuance to Halmos's discussion of his love of language and using words to convey ideas. Students and teachers may explore the language and examples of Halmos and practice using disciplinary language to make their own literacy narrative more nuanced, drawing parallels between concepts within mathematics and situations in life outside of the discipline.

In addition to examining the language of mathematics that Halmos uses, *I Want to Be a Mathematician* provides an engaging look at the wide variety of literacy practices within mathematics as a discipline and the range of job opportunities that students could consider having become professionals within the field. As students grow to understand how writing is used within mathematics along with the ways of thinking, researching, and communicating ideas that exist in the discipline, they can consider how their own careers could unfold based upon their particular interests and strengths as individuals. Writing their own literacy narrative within a WID course, like Halmos, students can reflect upon what it is they value and find interesting about mathematics as well as how the literacy practices they are using can translate into future employment opportunities and a life-long engagement with their discipline.

Halmos's literacy narrative demonstrates the importance of being able to write *about* mathematics, since mathematics, perhaps more overtly than other disciplines,

has a disciplinary language all its own. By relating how he learned to write about mathematics, Halmos provides readers with a sense of both his conceptual and applicable understanding of mathematics as well as the importance of being able to describe mathematical concepts to one's peers, students, and colleagues. Because Halmos's text is considerably more focused on his discipline than his personal life and engages primarily with reader who will understand mathematical concepts, this text would be particularly valuable for students within the major as they develop strategies for studying and the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in the mathematics community of students, teachers, and scholars.

Choosing Literacy Narratives for the Classroom

Choosing literacy narratives to use within a classroom depends greatly upon the goals of the course as well as the level of the students. Within a lower-division course that is an entry into the university, as with a first-year seminar, a literacy narrative that is written for a public audience like *Wait Till Next Year* or *Deep Blue Home* would be appropriate for students. These narratives can provide students with ideas and language that, though accessible, are also complex and challenging when read closely and examined for the significance of the literacy practices. As students progress through the university and take courses that introduce them to their major, and later WID courses, literacy narratives with more discipline-specific language, practices, and examples would help students to continue their own engagement with the discipline and further develop their professional identities. *I Want to Be a*

Mathematician and other discipline-specific narratives are particularly useful in this way because they demonstrate the relationship between identity and study habits and between identity and professional involvement, seen in Halmos's discussion of his research, publications, and career as a teacher and mentor.

Finding texts to use within disciplines can be a challenge if a teacher is not familiar with many memoir-type works about their field. However, discussions with other faculty can often yield interesting resources and knowledge of texts both within and outside of the discipline that could be relevant to students. In interdisciplinary courses, such as a first-year seminar that combines knowledge of two disciplines, finding narratives from both disciplines or using one interdisciplinary reading could help students to see the value of disciplinary literacy practices used in conjunction with one another—practices that complement one another and combine important literacy practices from both fields. For example, a course combining discussion of literacy practices in statistics and those in public health could be particularly valuable in demonstrating to students how two fields can work together to produce research and writing that is important both to a disciplinary audience and to a public one.

To make literacy narratives easier to find, teachers can keep in mind that literacy narratives come in many forms. It is not necessary for students to read an entire book to develop an understanding of the complexity of literacy. Literacy narratives may range from an entire book to a single paragraph, and looking at the literacy events in detail using a structured framework like Hamilton's table of literacy events gives students the opportunity to look closely at literacy events in context. In

addition to traditional autobiographies, literacy narratives can also include forms such as photographs, poetry, online writing, animation, or videos.

Keeping in mind that literacy narratives come in so many forms, teachers can find a range of voices and experience to which students can connect. With a diverse range of voices, including narratives from different genders, domains of literacy, and professional perspectives on the field, teachers can maximize the chances of students coming to a fuller understanding of how literacy is defined and used within their disciplines. Teachers can use Hamilton's table of basic literacy elements to evaluate to what degree the text they are considering for the course would work well given their level of the course and its objectives.

Once students understand the genre of the literacy narrative, they may locate literacy narratives that teachers are not yet familiar with. In this way, students have the opportunity to locate their own texts and to contribute to texts available for future students in the same course. Students may also contribute to the models available for the future if they are willing to share the literacy narratives they write in their courses. Using models from a variety of different student and professional voices, teachers can provide students with narratives that illustrate a diverse range of literacy experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In the last two chapters, I've proposed an approach to teaching literacy narratives that expands upon the current approach by promoting use of diverse literacy narratives, situating literacy narratives within university contexts other than composition, and providing a framework for teachers and students to use as they critically engage with literacy narratives from across the disciplines. In conclusion, I will discuss the significance of this research for students and teachers, the limitations of this project, and the possibilities for future research and faculty development.

Constructing a professional identity is a difficult process for students who are entering disciplinary communities. Professors in the disciplines have internalized the literacy practices that are part of their professional identity, making it hard for them to communicate these practices to students who are novices looking for clear answers to what kind of communication occurs within their disciplines and *how* that communication occurs. What I have proposed in this thesis is a way to help students make this transition to a professional identity by using literacy narratives in new ways that take into account the versatility of the genre and its many wonderful examples from across the disciplines. Literacy narratives provide an opening for discussion of literacy practices, and these narratives can assist teachers as they communicate the importance and variety of literacies within their disciplines, providing students with concrete experience with literacy practices that will be important to them as professionals. Once students have become professionals within their fields, having

methods for critically reflecting on their practices will allow them to continue actively considering how literacy influences their work and their relationships with others.

This work with literacy narratives has been primarily informed by an understanding of New Literacy Studies and by research in composition. This thesis does not claim to explain all the ways literacy narratives might be used in the disciplines. Instead, it invites teachers in the disciplines to begin conversations about literacy and to consider adapting this pedagogy to their own field. Each discipline has its own theories to contribute to discussions of literacy, allowing students to get a more complete understanding of the literacy practices that shape research and communication within the discipline. In this past chapter, three literacy narratives have been discussed as possibilities for use in the classroom. This thesis is not able to identify specific narratives for all disciplines, but encourages faculty from across the curriculum to identify narratives that would be appropriate and effective for use within their own courses.

Because what this thesis proposes is new—using literacy narratives within first-year seminars, introductory courses to the major, and WID courses—research about how best to read and write literacy narratives within these courses does not currently exist. However, there are promising openings for research in certain disciplines, especially those where reflective practice is not only encouraged but at times required. For example, the field of healthcare already uses narratives that encourage professionals to focus on critical incidents and involvement with diverse communities, two aspects of the field that have significant impacts on a practitioner's

mental and physical health. For those disciplines where reflective practices does not occur as commonly, research into the use of literacy narratives within that discipline may need to start from the ground up through recognition of the value of writing *about* the work that is done within the field, as well as valuing the work itself.

The limitations of canonical texts currently used to teach literacy narratives indicate the need for identifying more diverse examples. Finding these examples provides research opportunities for faculty who, understanding their profession's literacy practices and the objectives of their courses, are best suited to find effective example narratives written by their fellow professionals. In addition, there are opportunities to incorporate literacy narratives from a variety of mediums that illustrate different ways to represent one's history and experiences. Hamilton's work with photographs is one example, though literacy narratives can come in a variety of visual forms, such as graphic memoirs and videos. In Goodwin, Whitty, and Halmos, I have discussed three examples of literacy narratives, but many more exist. Researchers developing a robust list of literacy narratives representing many disciplines could help teachers recognize possible readings in their own fields. The goal of such research would not be to create a new canon, but rather to identify and make a variety of texts accessible to teachers who hope to bring a broad variety of voices, themes, and experiences to their course. Additionally, research on the differences in literacy practices between disciplines could contribute to more interdisciplinary partnerships, as professionals from across the disciplines can see the

ways in which disciplinary literacy practices complement one another and can be used collaboratively to achieve professional goals.

There is also potential for research and use of literacy narratives in faculty development. Workshops and seminars for WID faculty can invite teachers to explore their own literacy practices and history. Faculty can also gain a strong theoretical and practical understanding of literacy narratives prior to their use in classrooms. Within two or three sessions, faculty could learn about the genre of literacy narratives, identify narrative models from the field, practice reading literacy narratives with attention to important features that construct literacy events, and design reading and writing assignments for their own courses.

Faculty may also compose their own literacy narratives. Teachers would then acquaint themselves with the genre and the assignment their students would be given while also benefiting from the opportunity to reflect upon their own literacy practices both within and outside of the university. By sharing their own literacy narratives with their colleagues, teachers from across the disciplines have the opportunity to gain greater understanding of the importance of literacy within professional work. Literacy narratives, then, can not only be a practical assignment within the classroom but also a way for faculty to build community and relationships with each other as they recognize shared literacy practices and values within their disciplines.

Literacy narratives offer a broad range of opportunities for students and teachers alike, as this genre encourages critical reflection as well as valuing one's personal and professional experiences communicating with others. By pointing to

some of these as yet un-researched areas of literacy narratives, I hope to give readers a sense of the range of opportunities available for scholars and teachers to recognize and incorporate discussion of literacy and its implications within their classrooms. By looking at literacy practices within and outside of the university as valuable aspects of students' identities, educators can not only acknowledge, but also support the many literacy practices that will shape students' personal and professional lives.

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