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Captivating Culture and Composition: Life Writing, Storytelling, Folklore, and Heritage Literacy Connections to First-Year Composition

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CAPTIVATING CULTURE AND COMPOSITION: LIFE WRITING,
STORYTELLING, FOLKLORE, AND HERITAGE LITERACY CONNECTIONS
TO FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2014

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Title: Captivating Culture and Composition: Life Writing, Storytelling,
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This dissertation serves as a gathering place for the disparate strands of life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy as they can or cannot be applied to composition courses, especially the first-year composition class. A wealth of knowledge surrounds students that could be used for research and essay material, yet students' background knowledge can be disparaged. In addition, interdisciplinary information may be limited by discipline boundaries or discipline-specific conferences and journals where the results are not generally known within the field of composition, especially by first-year teachers.

The knowledge of the ordinary person and an understanding of how that knowledge and wisdom is passed is worthy of academic study in the first-year writing course. The topics generated from this study should tap into a student's insider knowledge and into the generational passing of knowledge within a community. Researching and writing about topics within a first-year learner's sphere of reference may ease the acquisition of academic discourse.

My experience as a literacy educator, a storyteller, and an author informs my research.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW

Introduction

As a non-traditional student returning to school in 1997, the knowledge I gained through living and raising a family and creating two family businesses was not applicable in an academic setting; instead, I had to look for “objective,” thus acceptable, academic topics. Furthermore, when I was an educator teaching in a community college, I found that our departmental outcomes included teaching research methods as supported by course textbooks which moved students away from the personal to an objective research method. This involved choosing topics with sufficient material available in the library in order to learn research skills and write in depth on a topic. In addition, I found that students often felt frustrated with composition in general and finding topics worthy of academic research in particular. However, assignments based on life experience situated in place-based knowledge are not synonymous with assignments lacking academic application or a research component.

Linking life writing to the sense of *the commons* for research could create a plethora of topics related to student knowledge. C.A. Bowers explains the term: The *commons* refers to “all of the environment”—air, language, bioregions, local knowledge and decisions, games, “craft knowledge” developed regionally, and “the narratives that intergenerationally [sic] renewed their [people’s] sense of identity and values” (2). The commons also refers to ordinary people and to a place in a college for all to dine. I draw upon all the sense of the commons as I

examine narrative, crafts, and the passing of knowledge—storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy— as *[re]storying the commons*—a call to ordinary people to come to the academic table where their stories, wisdom, folk knowledge, and heritage literacies are welcome. Each of these topics is worthy of a dissertation in itself; however, the grouping together creates a broadened perspective and application which is of particular use to the first-year composition classroom.

First-Year Composition

The first-year composition course (FYC) is a key to college success, preparing learners for the fundamental writing proficiency college courses require (Gere “Kitchen” 1093). FYC is a required course for discipline tracks across the curriculum which makes composition the most “broadly based” academic discipline (Miller and Jackson 685). As literacy educators, composition instructors teach the writing concepts and tools that can be carried forward into other classes and into learners’ lives. Instructors can be idealistic, with a mindset to help others, and understand writing both as a way to help students empower their lives and as a means to change society—one learner’s life at a time (Daniell, “Narratives” 400; Connors, “Composition” 145; Holladay 30; Elbow, “Cultures” 542; Bazerman, “Greetings”). However, our students come with diverse needs and areas and levels of preparedness, and *The Council Chronicle* calls for a variety of ways to tighten the preparedness gap among students because “writing acts as a gatekeeper; weak writing skills limit school, job, and advancement opportunities” (Gere et al, “Writing”). Although most composition courses include a personal essay, students are expected to move beyond the

personal to write about academic topics which, as a general rule, do not include topics connected to knowledge in learners' home backgrounds; the knowledge they bring to the academic table can be disparaged and discouraged and not viewed as a "resource" (Troyka 20). In my experience as a graduate student and as a composition instructor in the past fifteen years, personal writing was deemed more appropriate for a basic writing class.

Hindrances

In the first year of college, students can feel displaced between their home environments and the college campus and are vulnerable to dropping out of school (Feldman and Zimbler). Keying into students' life experiences and prior knowledge may influence their attitude towards their identity as college students and may affect college retention. David L. Wallace and Helen Rothschild Ewald's concept of *mutuality* in *Mutuality in the Rhetoric and Composition Classroom* speaks to this issue. When defined as a goal for the classroom, *mutuality* suggests that students and instructors, through mutual respect and dialogue, prepare for a class outcome which has a "potential to adopt a range of subject positions and to establish reciprocal discourse relations as they negotiate meaning in the classroom" (2). However, to widen the possibilities of responses beyond that of resisting the dominant culture, a position favored in particular by Marxist and feminist ideologies, Wallace and Ewald suggest the development of student agency "in a middle space between students' own experiences and the expectations of the discourse communities in which they will have to achieve voice" (3). First-year learners may be unaware of disciplinary discourse

expectations, especially if they have not settled upon a major field of study. The first-year composition course acts as an introduction to academic life and serves the function of representing a safe place of learning to begin to come to voice in the academic discourse community.

Academic specialization and discipline turf wars can also hinder students from more fully applying their cultural literacy knowledge in the first year of college. Specialized knowledge is often limited to discipline-specific coursework, and even within disciplines, specialized knowledge and boundaries can be jealously guarded. For instance, in their call for an expanded vision for university writing programs, "Writing Beyond the Curriculum: Fostering New Collaborations in Literacy," Steve Parks and Eli Goldblatt note the "mutual hostility" among colleagues from the English and from the education departments who rarely acknowledge one another; a hostility which even extends to the selection of students as writing tutors (592). In addition, there are instances where composition and life writing, storytelling, folklore, or heritage literacy are interconnected, but the application of the interdisciplinary information may be presented in discipline-specific conferences, journals, or dissertations where the results are not generally known within the field of composition, especially by first-year teachers.

First-year students cope with various demands and pressures as they adapt to academic life. However, the disparagement of one's home knowledge, folklore, language, and heritage literacies can hinder success as can disciplinary boundaries that lead to isolationist thinking. The concept of *[re]storying the*

commons provides a forum for learners and for academics to better understand and value the breadth of knowledge, literacies, and skills that can be brought to the table and to explore ways to integrate those stories into academic discourse.

Purpose of the Dissertation

The purpose of this dissertation is to serve as a gathering place for the disparate strands of storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy as aspects of *[re]storying the commons*, and to investigate how they can or cannot be applied to first-year composition learners. As such, the material collected for this dissertation is based not only on published works including books, articles, presentations, and syllabi, but also on the personal knowledge of the author as a community college instructor, life writing consultant, storyteller, and author. Narrative theory frames the work, and geography acts as a terministic screen—a lens through which to situate these strands within the field of composition. Of note: Geography could be considered as another aspect of the commons. However, I came to the phrase, *[re]storying the commons*, late in the dissertation process. In addition, the term “environment” is too general whereas “geography” was more specifically developed in the dissertation.

From Oral Story to a National Movement

The urge to capture life events and meaning is ancient. Oral stories retold genealogies, captured life incidents, passed on values, entertained, and, eventually, became anchored in writing. Stories were also visual. From cave drawings to tapestries to tattoos, people have used available materials to depict life events. Prehistoric humans illustrated bare rock walls with vibrant scenes of

animals, figures, hunting, and handprints, the latter leaving a unique marker of identity. Medieval tapestries and embroideries wove tales of battles and love, and modern day tattoos continue delivering a statement of identity with themes of “love, death, or belonging” (Tucker 56, 60). Chris Rainier, a photographer and former assistant to Ansel Adams, studied tattoos globally and authored the 2006 book *Ancient Marks: The Sacred Origin of Tattoos and Body Markings*. Rainier adds narrative to the identity theme of tattoos when he comments that “[b]lank skin ... is merely a canvas for a story” (qtd. in Tucker 56). Whether ancient cave art, oral narratives, or modern tattoos, the urge to capture story and meaning in life is written deep within humanity’s psyche.

The topic of life writing is timely. Americans are interested in their life stories, as evidenced by the growing number of programs and presentations focused on exploring one’s story. Although story is so commonplace as to permeate all aspects of our lives through multimedia connections of novels, television, videos, electronic games, and movies, a more focused application of story is emerging—one emphasizing the importance of a single, ordinary life.

This focus is a national, popular movement with a growing international scope. It includes federal and state governments, museums, Public Broadcasting System (PBS) programs, and encompasses all ages. In 2000, Congress authorized the Veteran’s History Project, a collection of personal narratives, correspondence, and visual media of veterans. Moving beyond the average GI Joe, in 2003 StoryCorps was established. Believing “every voice matters,” StoryCorps collected more than 40,000 interviews and stored the material at the

American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress where it is available to the general public (“StoryCorps”). Museums capture their audiences by situating them in the narrative of the time or focusing on a particular theme and medium as in the Smithsonian’s recent exhibit at the American Museum of Art, “Telling Stories: Norman Rockwell from the Collection of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg” (“Telling”). The Ohio Department on Aging collected people’s stories on surviving the great depression in the 1920s. They also collected stories from those involved with giving or receiving care to provide a knowledge base for people today who are learning to cope with surviving financial disaster or with managing life as a caregiver or care-receiver (Ohio, “Great”; Ohio, “Submit”). Children are invited to participate in writing at “The Neighborhood Story” at the internet site *Mister Roger’s Neighborhood* at PBS Kids. In addition, social media exists to include others in the ongoing narrative of one’s life. Facebook even announces new information to users with the message, “You have missed some popular stories.”

These phenomena of narrative interest expanded to include tracing family histories, and that interest has grown exponentially since the turn of the 21st century. Ancestry.com, a website that helps people trace family ancestors through access to various records such as census data, military records, and birth, death, and marriage notices, expanded internationally in 2005 to the United Kingdom, Canada, and Austria. The company now has sites in Germany, Sweden, France, and China and overall access to twelve languages and more than 10 billion records (“About Ancestry”). In addition, the opportunity to trace

family roots through DNA is available to anyone for the cost of about one hundred dollars through the National Geographic Society's (NGS) Genographic Project. Launched in 2005 and extended through 2011, this project is an attempt to map the migratory history of the human journey through analyzing the DNA of indigenous and traditional people. The research team includes international scientists, IBM personnel, and is led by the NGS Explorer-in-Residence, Dr. Spencer Wells. On the website, the general public is invited to click on "Migration Stories," brief stories submitted by ordinary people and told through text, video, and slide show, and to participate by submitting their DNA and their story ("About Genographic").

The quest for family identity expanded in March 2012 when PBS launched *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* Dr. Gates is the director for the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for African and African American Research, an author of many scholarly works and documentaries, as well as being the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University. The PBS program that Dr. Gates hosts traces the roots of two celebrities each week, but that is only one aspect of the program. On its website, visitors are invited to submit their family's stories for "each of us has a rich, unique genealogical heritage to share" (*Finding*). Whether vets recount their experiences, the public accesses a database of collected wisdom stories, a child writes a neighborhood story, or people write and publish stories about their times, themselves, and their families, narrative writing is rampant across America and involves the ordinary American.

Ironically, while outside the academy, business enterprises and others have paid attention, inside the academy is another story.

Although the national interest in life story is ubiquitous, that is not the case with American university composition classrooms. Caught in the canon of known names or worthy lives, first-year composition courses, in my experience, did not apply ordinary life stories beyond the common first assignment of a personal essay. Whether as a national movement or as part of the “Get My Story” narrative on the Indiana University of Pennsylvania’s 2010 and 2011 homepage and billboards, the attraction of life story is a current phenomenon—one that could do justice to the scholarly research and writing required in university composition courses.

Research Questions

In this dissertation, I explore the possibilities of the following questions as they relate to the first-year composition course.

- How can life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy be applied to scholarly work in a college composition class?
- Are there instances or situations where life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy should not be applied to a college composition class?

It is not my intent to treat life writing to an equally in-depth review as I do storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy. Life writing is an enormous topic—one I cannot do justice to in this dissertation. Therefore, I cover life writing material as a foundational survey and as part of *[re]storying the commons*.

When I considered research questions, I had two things in mind. First, I wanted a broader area of research topics for composition students. I feel passionately that students should be able to connect the knowledge in their backgrounds to scholarly research. However, I was concerned lest students equate the treatment of a high school paper topic with a college assignment; they needed to engage with the material they researched, for as Charles Bazerman notes, students respond to and “grow as literate beings insofar as the literacy tasks become important to them” (“The Diversity”).

I also wanted tools to expand my students’ vision—something they could grasp to enlarge and examine the world around them—something without an apparent political agenda, although the latter is against the grain of the discipline. As Beth Daniell comments, “few disciplines are as blatantly political as composition is—departmentally, institutionally, and nationally” (“*A Communion*” 3). Much of the political language and thinking common to composition seems to confuse my students. Students have come to me puzzled at the way their ethnic group or “class” of people or gender is presented in their textbook reader saying, “It’s not like that.” *Re-storying the commons* could serve as a tool for students to consider and research the influences and narratives of people, places, and the environment within their spheres of influence, knowledge, and interest.

My Experience

My experience as a storyteller and author informs the research. As a storyteller, I have told stories orally in K-12 schools in Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia. However, beyond a professional performance, storytelling is as common

as relating an anecdote; it connects to an oral heritage as a means of passing knowledge and wisdom. It also applies to most lives today in technical ways. In particular, it is an aspect of professional lives in education, law, medicine, business, and psychiatry and is especially applicable to leadership in any area. Through stories and writing, I connected to folklore. On the New York Folklore Society's website, folklore and folk life are "cultural ways in which a group maintains and passes on a shared way of life" and include "traditional arts, belief, traditional ways of work and leisure, adornment and celebrations" ("What Is Folklore?"). Folklore permeates all aspects of our culture: food, particular ways of doing things, customs and celebrations, reading the weather, jokes, work, superstitions, gossip, proverbs.

Heritage literacy presents another venue for learners. I first thought of this as a means to expand a history of literacy assignment—tracing the development of literacy knowledge. However, the term has broader application. It can refer to heritage languages and the growth of language in general in one's life. It can also incorporate aspects of home literacies, usually thought of as "not measurable ...[and] rarely recognized as valuable in the classroom"; for instance, Appalachian children may be familiar with the *Bible* and its books, with growing tobacco and writing about it, or applying a ruler based on a family member's work experience in a sawmill (Clark 177-178). In addition, Suzanne K. Rumsey applies it to the intergenerational decisions made when passing and receiving knowledge (575-576). Heritage literacies can refer to the plural ways of coming to knowledge

thus, at times, I refer to craft knowledge and storytelling as heritage literacies. Narrative, crafts, and the passing of knowledge are developed in chapter four.

Student Attitudes and Retention

Students come to the first-year composition class with mixed attitudes. The class is seen as “frustrating”—a course to be avoided or relegated to dual credit opportunities in high school or to summer sessions at a community college (Clark 178); it is a “distraction from the ‘real’ work of their majors” and an “inexplicably required course” (Gorelsky 305). Joe Napora relates changes brought by literacy to Indians who came from a culture where the Old Ones passed their knowledge through stories. The younger Indians had to take first-year composition as a required course, a course they viewed as a “test of abilities they had failed to do so many times” (70). Many of my students resented having to learn to write an essay, a form they felt they would never use in “real life.” The course also keys into years of memories of English teachers, for English is a course common to all grades of primary education.

I have been surprised by the force of negative emotion in ordinary people in the community when I answer a question about the kind of work I do. Negative responses to writing have long memories and can rise to the surface of the present with the flicker of recall. Although I’ve owned and operated businesses in Vermont and Texas and have been an active member of the communities where I have lived, if I mention now that I teach writing it is as though a cold wind blows across the conversation and relationship. People of all ages across the community usually react with an immediate defense: “Oh, English was my worst

subject”; “I was never ever any good at writing”; “I never could spell,” or the like. Those comments are voiced quickly, without thinking, with a depth of emotion that makes a voice quiver and the body language coordinate with the words—the head moves side to side as when saying “no” and the person often steps back. Because I entered the field of teaching at an older age, I have been particularly aware of the reaction. The rawness of the emotion and the spontaneous body language surprised me; however, it is the attribution of judgment that shocked me—the sense that all English teachers are negatively judgmental. If ordinary people in communities in two different parts of the country react in similar ways, what kind of impressions do our students bring?

Helping students move beyond the past to the power and possibilities of composition is part of my work as an instructor at a community college. First-year students are especially vulnerable to not adjusting to college life and identity. Opening academic research to include students’ backgrounds as worthy of research may affect student retention. Pierre Bourdieu suggests that theoretically it would seem educational institutions and families from different social classes would cooperate to “transmit a cultural heritage which is considered as being the undivided property of the whole society”; however, he adds that in actuality the cultural code belongs to those “endowed with the means of appropriating it”—those who are reinforced in the educational system through their ability to *decipher* cultural codes based on their prior knowledge and familial and class support of money, time, and training (488, 495). These learners understand the language and behavior of success in the dominant culture which translates into a

long-term investment and acts as a form of capital for those individuals. Those who have not had the opportunity to learn to appropriate those cultural nuances may leave school or diminish its importance, reduce their own significance, or portray “a resigned attitude to failure and exclusion” (Bourdieu 495). Encouraging first-year learners to write about their backgrounds gives them the opportunity to gain that cultural capital if they stay in school.

Cultural capital takes time to appropriate for those who have not been exposed to it or who have not had opportunity to practice it. According to a policy paper, *Engendering College Student Success*, by the McGraw-Hill Research Foundation, in the first year of college, students are most vulnerable to not returning the following year. Almost half the students enrolled in a two-year college drop out—44%— and 45% drop out of open admissions two-year schools. The numbers are equally disturbing for four-year colleges but not as drastic: 28% of first-year students do not return (Feldman and Zimble). In the interest of student success, learners’ transitions to the academy may be eased if they are able to relate academic discourse and narrative—the writing knowledge they are learning— to their life experiences or to their families’ experiences and to build upon that knowledge. Learners may also feel more valued and validated if they can access their prior knowledge and literacies when they connect composition assignments to their background knowledge. However, Bourdieu suggests a sense of insider exclusivity in the self-perpetuating structure of domination from those who have been apprenticed in the system, such that people from other backgrounds may not be acceptable—their “segregation

....reinforced” (495-97). Commenting on the lack of support in higher education to discover the Filipino part of his identity, Gerald Campano, author of *Students and Literacy: Reading Writing and Remembering*, remarks that “[t]o be ‘academic’ and to be ‘ethnic’ seemed mutually exclusive endeavors” (12). He adds that educational reforms do not use the wealth of information and legacies students bring with them to the academy (1-2). Other students, especially students of color, become acquainted with the dominate culture for survival, but their own life experiences have been ignored, and even they know little about other minority cultures (Jay and Jones 101). Learning about other cultures and acquiring cultural capital takes time—at a time when first-year learners are hard-pressed to adapt.

In addition, students arrive at college with a broad range of academic preparedness. Underprepared students are at-risk as are students of color who are vulnerable to leave college at an above average rate (Maldonado et al 605). A “dismal dropout rate” ends academic hopes for many inner-city students, “many of whom are African-American, and some of them poor” (Schneider 919). Ronald Roach, author of “Jump Starting Latino Achievement” in *Diversity: Issues of Higher Education*, points out that the United States will be a non-white majority nation by 2050. His concern is that while 80% of fast-growing jobs in the nation will demand higher education, unless something is done now, few Hispanics will qualify because only 10% have a college education. Learners from all cultures and backgrounds must pass through first-year composition. Accessing their

backgrounds as sites for research may foster academic connections and identities and encourage students to stay in school.

Academic Attitudes

Instructors have sometimes been shortsighted. Joseph Trimmer, editor of *Narrative as Knowledge: Tales of the Teaching Life* recalls a time when instructors asked for a first assignment narrative based on an incident that touched and transformed the learner's life:

...we did not read their stories as stories. We diagnosed them, marking the errors that excluded them from academic discourse. We told them they could not use stories to report learning. That purpose was reserved for the privileged rhetorical forms—analysis and argument. We moved on, teaching them to write *about* stories ... (x his emphasis)

Clearly, as Trimmer suggests, the instructors at the time missed the point and were constricted by what Lad Tobin explains as the academic world's assumption that "abstract, highly theoretical writing is necessarily superior to clear and accessible narrative" ("Foreword" x).

The academic focus on analysis and argument and objectivity is required and reasonable. However, it can escalate and complicate issues of identity. Anne Ruggles Gere suggests that many students succeed in composition by "distancing themselves from persons and experiences important to their everyday lives"; she charges composition with creating a cookie-cutter-like culture of "autonomous individuals willing to adapt the language and perspectives

of others" ("Kitchen" 1093). Bronwyn Williams moves beyond autonomous individuals to identity conflicts: "...if you master the discourse, what conflict does it place you in with the primary discourse of your home or community? Or, to put it more bluntly, which identity do you choose?" (345). Gian Pagnucci takes the notion a step further, warning us to be careful for "if we take too much of students' original selves, they can never go back home" (*Living* 25). Faced with a composition culture of conformity or the false dichotomy of either a college identity or a home identity, students are placed in an untenable position. Bourdieu addresses the idea of conforming to an academic ideal and questions the legitimacy of a dominant culture's language practices. He insists on the importance and complexity of the socio-historical aspect of linguistic occurrences and challenges notions of an "ideal speaker" or a "homogenous speech community" (Thompson 5). Nancy Maloney Grimm captures the cost to students and their cultures: "... the loss of motivation, the compromise of creativity, the silencing of family stories, the impediments to agency, the suppression of literacies and world views" (*Good* xvi).

In addition, student writers have to "invent the university" in learning to speak and write academic discourse and are in a "constant tangle with the language" as they learn to create such discourse (Bartholomae "Inventing" 511, 523). Students can produce "drab discourse, vacant of originality or commitment" (Davis and Shadle 421); their writing can be boring, or, as one student remarked, an "empty performance...like an atheist going to church" (Johnson and Moneysmith ix-x). Student writing about life experience is not a guarantee of

more interesting work, but accessing and applying their knowledge in academic ways may influence the content of the essay and the way it is written. It might as well answer Bruce Ballenger's question: how we can "turn the research assignment into a meaningful intellectual exercise rather than an empty exercise of 'research skills'" (qtd. in Johnson and Moneysmith x).

The nature of academic specialties and discipline boundaries inhibits sharing knowledge that could benefit the first-year student. There can be a focus on the "field and trends rather than connecting the work of the discipline to the broader spheres of experience that students bring to the work" (Miller and Jackson 702). Although narrow specializations within a field create the opportunity for a broad, knowledgeable department, they can contend with each other for departmental decisions regarding power, money, space, and prestige. Grimm suggests that with the academic "tacit habits of exclusion," employees understand who to speak to or listen to; Brian Street suggests that the participation in institutional language positions one so that "myriad relationships of power, authority, status are implied and reaffirmed" (qtd. in Grimm, "Rearticulating" 526).

Specialization can also create insular thinking, particularly in the English Studies department which is notorious for its interdepartmental warfare. Composition is "attacked by insiders" (Bartholomae, "What" 22) who are "remarkably rancorous" (Elbow, "Cultures" 541). In the department, composition is perceived as "inferior" to literature (Bizzell, "Contact" 168), as a "service course" with the job of correcting grammar (Clark 178), and as the "step-child of

literature (Elbow, "Some" 185). Robert J. Connors in his history of composition describes the spread of factions within the field as "entrenched and warring intellectual cliques, with their creation of friend and enemy lists" and notes the change from 1970 to 1990 at the Conference of College Composition and Communication as "marked more and more by a theoretical camps mentality of inclusion and exclusion" ("Composition" 11).

This change was influenced, in part, by James A Berlin's "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" published in *College English* in September 1988. His analysis of "expressionistic rhetoric" and his own rhetoric is designed to produce a skeptical, negative emotional response in the reader. He cleverly frames his discussion with an expressive history based on a "romantic recoil from ...urban horrors," links that discussion to a 1920's isolated elitist attitude of writing as a "gift of genius," an "art," of "which all are capable" when linked to an expressive rhetoric allied with a psychological theory advocating the "goodness of the individual," one "distorted by excessive contact with others" (484). Most compositionists would laugh at the thought of writing as an exclusive "art" and raise an eyebrow at the thought of the "goodness" of all humankind. Having set up audience attitude, Berlin follows the opening salvo with his second paragraph in which he bombards the reader thirteen times with the word "self" in various forms: "not-self," "self-experience," "self-expression," "self-discovery," "self-revelation," true self," and "self," and adds, for variety, "individual" four times (484-485). This does not happen again until the last eleven lines of the expressive rhetoric section where he again blasts the reader with six instances of

“self” or “individual” (487). The rhetoric in the essay was accepted and influenced the turn away from the personal in composition.

The English department’s rancorous reputation spread beyond academia. The National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy “worr[ies] about arguments that divide the field into camps” (Freedman 1050). These boundaries and barriers hinder sharing the wealth of knowledge that could benefit learners, especially first-year learners.

The field of composition has moved away from an emphasis on personal writing, influenced, in part, by Berlin’s essay. However, outside the academy Berlin’s rhetorical jack hammer denigrating the idea of “self” was not heard. From blogging to researching family origins and stories, interest in personal writing has exploded nationally and internationally, fueled in part by internet accessibility. The year after Berlin’s essay was published, the world-wide web was invented in 1989 by Tim Berbers-Lee, and within thirty years—by 2009, “1.7 billion people were on the web”; indeed, it is cited as the “agent of empowerment for all the world” (“History of the Web”). Ordinary people, not just an elite few, have an opportunity to sound their voice. Academically, in 2009, the popular interest in writing was recognized by one of the national professional organizations for compositionists, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), when it initiated the National Day of Writing and the National Gallery of Writing archive which calls for writing from all people. Today, a search of the “Books” category on amazon.com with “personal writing” nets 799 titles, and a search with “life

writing” shows 10,483 results. In the “real” world, people are interested in learning about writing about their lives; in the academic world, learning lagged.

New Realities

With the twenty-first century, all our realities are changing. Although college student enrollment has increased fifty percent in the past thirty years, fewer students graduate now with bachelor degrees in English than graduated in 1970s, according to a 2002 report from U.S. Department of Education’s *Digest of Education Statistics* and the ADE Committee on Staffing (Miller and Jackson 685). Not only are there now fewer people from the field of English Studies in the nation’s population, most Americans are not familiar with essays. There is no “tradition of ... reading collections of what they regard as essays,” yet essays, “short works of belletristic nonfiction,” are considered the “lingua franca of the American academy” (Bloom, “The Essay” 945, 947,953). In 2002 in the introduction to *Talking, Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies in the Teaching of Writing*, Stephen M. North adds to the alarm when he sounds a “wakeup call” stating that today’s students “will experience that world [print-based prose] as remote, alien, and threatening. Written language will not have been their thing as it was mine”(“Introduction” x). The 2007 report, *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence*, by the National Endowment for the Arts seems to confirm North’s concern. The report gathered major studies to collect current data which all agree on the state of American reading: Although teen and adult reading declined from a 2004 report, “[m]ost alarming both reading ability and the habit of regular reading have generally declined among college

graduates” (Gioia 5). A growing unfamiliarity with the print-based world as we have known it for the past fifty years is another influence students have to cope with in first-year composition.

“[C]risis and change” are part of composition’s move to the 21st century (Bloom, Daiker, and White, “Editors” xi). Part of that change includes a move toward narrative and stories, if only because of the national and international thrust toward understanding life and creating meaning, one life at a time. Wars, violent destruction with hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes, as well as economic terror are shaking the world as we know it. People everywhere in all circumstances are learning to cope and survive in changed circumstances. The inclusion of story at a composition conference signaled some of the new realities. Bazerman, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina’s devastation, addressed a world of change in New Orleans at the 2008 Conference on College Composition and Communication, “Writing Realities, Creating Realities.” He notes “[u]nprecedented numbers of panels ... [and] presentations inscribe and confront our realities” (“Greetings”). That conference included an address by the Neighborhood Story Project (NSP), a move to collect the stories of the devastation of New Orleans as a place and the survival stories of its people. The NSP has continued, and its current projects for May 2012 reflect the simplicity, power, and pervasiveness of the partnership of story and geography, attributes which make the combination so suitable for topics of inquiry in composition. The 2012 projects include personal stories about the following: the winter season of horse racing at the fairgrounds; a work examining the music and effect of the

New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park; an autobiography based on a local, popular brass band; research concerning Indians and Mardi Gras, as well as a youth writing program (“Projects”).

Recognizing the need for change, Derek Owens, director of the Institute for Writing Studies at St. John’s University, suggests focusing on immediate crises locally and globally “that transcend disciplinary boundaries and reach into the lives of our students and their communities [which] might further strengthen our students and the public’s perception of our discipline’s *raison d’etre*” (“Curriculum” 118). In addition, Owens suggests the English department expand its vision to include conversations on sustainability, calling for connections across generations and aspects of geography—people, culture, ecosystems, and resources (“Curriculum” 119-120). Other changes include new coalitions extending into the community and the suggestion for literacy studies as a new center for English, although the outcome is doubtful: “Unfortunately, the belletristic presuppositions of traditional English majors make it very difficult for us to envision such possibilities” (Miller and Jackson 701). However, Nathalie Singh-Corcoran and Tomas P. Miller foresee new collaboration opportunities between librarians and disciplines based on a diversified student body and “intensifying accountability pressures” which are changing “conventions of researched writing” (212).

I come to this foray with a concern for students based on my experience as a parent, a non-traditional student, a writing center tutor, and a community college adjunct instructor. As a parent, I am deeply concerned with attrition and

the debt students incur to go to school, especially when they fail FYC. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York, based on the third quarter figures of 2011, reports that the national debt for education loans stands now at \$870 billion surpassing the national indebtedness for credit cards (\$693 billion) or for car loans (\$730 billion). Two-thirds of that debt is the responsibility of students to age thirty-nine, and the report does not cover the money borrowed privately (M. Brown et al). Failure not only costs time, money, and confidence, it encourages the poverty of mind, spirit, and circumstance that I, as a parent, and composition studies, as a discipline, so firmly stand against.

I returned to school in 1997 after raising my family and helping to raise a grandchild. I decided to complete a degree begun long ago and to pursue an interest in writing. I attended my local community college for nine months to complete new degree requirements before transferring to the University of Houston-Clear Lake. I learned, like most students, to juggle family, work, broken-down transportation, and unexpected life occurrences with academic deadlines. I became involved with the university writing center as a peer tutor at the University of Houston-Clear Lake and later as a graduate assistant at East Tennessee State University and as an adjunct faculty tutor at San Jacinto College. Writing centers are grounded in assisting students in practical ways of problem solving and helping them belong to the academic community (Grimm, "Rearticulating" 524). Grimm suggests writing centers are "crucibles" on the cutting edge for crucial issues and challenges identified by the Writing Program Administrators; these issues include identity, "authorship," "multiculturalism,"

literacy definitions, and “home literacies” (Grimm, *Good xiii*). Those writing center concepts resonated with me, echoing my own practical life experience and influencing my work as a college instructor as well as the writing of this dissertation.

When I began teaching as an adjunct instructor in 2000, I taught a variety of writing and literature courses at a community college in Houston, Texas, and later, I taught reading and composition courses at a community college in western Pennsylvania. In Houston, the college is situated in a city/suburban school district while in Pennsylvania, the college is at the northern end of the Appalachian Mountain system and is located in an area where most people live and die near the place of their birth. Whether the location was urban or rural, I found students worried about finding topics to write about that seemed academic. I sympathized with them for I remembered my own frustration when I learned that my life experiences were of little value and that my middle-class culture was disdained and the knowledge learned raising six children and their friends discounted. It did not matter the battles I fought to arrive on that college campus. Essay topics focused on argumentation and universal issues. As students, we set aside our personal life and experience—our identities—to put on our student identities to learn the knowledge and behavior to fit into the academic narrative, or as previously mentioned, to *decipher* the cultural codes, as Bourdieu would say. It seemed as though we were in a false dichotomy of either an academic identity or a home-based identity.

The twenty-first century challenges people, businesses, and institutions with new realities. As people and organizations learn to adapt to changed circumstances, story aids that process. It incorporates our individual and generational knowledge and wisdom.

Significance of the Research

My research is significant because it will strengthen inter- and intra-disciplinary connections and add to the body of knowledge in the fields of composition, narrative, life writing, folklife, storytelling, and literacy. *[Re]storying the commons* crosses disciplinary boundaries and provides instructors with an extensive array of topics related to a learner's literacies, family, language, traditions, and place-based knowledge in their backgrounds. Access to these topics may ease the transition to college by respecting the knowledge a learner brings and by scaffolding the first-year learner's life experience to growing literacy awareness in academic discourse. Although this research may not interest all students, I expect it to resonate with many. In addition, this research will expand the sense of personal writing for the general public.

Caveat

I am biased in favor of the attending topics, especially as appropriate for a first-year learner. As such, I will be diligent to consider ways these topics will not apply to the first-year learner. In addition, my background experiences influence my attitudes in ways that may be problematic as I advocate narrative writing based on the personal essay.

My oral background as a member of Toastmasters International primed me to appreciate focused presentations which carried over into my work as a storyteller. Although a story may be told by an “expert” teller, I find myself losing concentration and interest with a tale that rambles on. My oral background also influenced my writing and teaching. When I returned to school in 1997, I was deeply apprehensive of being capable of writing essays and totally confused when writing, for there was so much information and so little instruction that I wondered how I could possibly sort it all out. However, the contract of a thesis with the reader and with myself as a writer served as a boundary for information overload, simplified the chaos of ideas and words, and keyed into the organization of my oral/aural background. Additionally, as a literacy educator in a community college, I identify with the comments of Jane E. Hindman, editor of the Special Issue of *College English*, The Personal in Academic Writing, who suggests that readers of personal writing “may become impatient with wordy, unfocused, mundane, or irrelevant personal accounts” (10). So while I advocate narrative writing and research for college students, undergirding this is my personal penchant for organized writing on topics, my responsibility as an educator to meet course objectives, and my own desire to make my classroom a practical place of learning the craft of writing without an obvious pounding of a political pulpit.

Organization

The structure of the chapters is a blend of dissertation styles and genres. The usual literature review, method, and content sections follow; however,

stories are interspersed throughout and connect theory and practice. In chapter two, I review narrative theory, expressivism, geography as a terministic screen, life writing and first-year composition, literacy, and J. Frank Dobie, who exemplifies for me an interdisciplinary perspective as illustrated by his writing and regional notions. In chapter three, I examine my methodology, and, in chapter four, I review a brief history and current application of storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy. Chapter five connects story, folklore, and personal writing to some of my published and unpublished essays as examples of the intentional and unintentional application of storytelling, folklore, and literacy heritages. Chapter six addresses my research questions and relates the findings of the analysis of my work, and chapter seven closes the discussion with “found” items, including that of a writer’s voice. Joe Mackall influenced the content of this work with his suggestion in his dissertation: “...write what is in your heart, not what you think a dissertation has to be. Trust the life you have lived and in the stories you believe need to be told” (9).

Finally, in considering structure, the sense of *collage* resonates when I think of the discipline, the department, this dissertation and ordinary people and story. In 2010, in *American Art: Smithsonian American Art Museum*, Kathryn Brown wrote “The Artist as Urban Geographer: Mark Bradford and Julie Mehretu.” In her analysis of Bradford’s large, mixed media, grid-based structures representing cities, she makes several observations that seem apt. Although in the past, grid structures were flat and impersonal, these 21st century representations of found material “. . . suggest ways in which its figurative space

can make visible diverse relations between individuals, communities, and the city....trace unseen characteristics of familiar locations...[and require] the viewer to recognize different forms of representation that overlap and obscure each other's meanings" (K.Brown 102-105).

This dissertation seeks to *[re]story the commons* so that first-year learners may enter college with an acknowledged respect for their cultural literacy and identity. Additionally, I seek to provide a place where student narratives find some artifacts of a particular place and combine them with memory and language to create, like Bradford's collages, "a sense of place" (K.Brown 106). A final chapter will place the "found" information together and reflect on new areas of research. I hope that the sense of a collage will encourage the reader to "enter, in some surprising ways, into the spirit of this place" (Wallace 51).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I situate my research within the narrative theory movement in composition studies and include a discussion of Expressivism, the personal essay, life writing, and the first-year composition course. Next, I explore geography to ground *[re]storying the commons* within a learner's range of experience. Moving from the geographic world to the word, I consider notions of literacy and learners. Finally, I will illustrate my discussion with the work of Dobie, a notable Texas professor, author, historian, folklorist, and storyteller who lived from 1888-1964. But first, I will define terms and discuss the notion of "making meaning," a phrase which is foundational to composition studies and to this research.

The following terms have similarities and need to be clarified: *narrative*, *story*, *narrative theory*, *autobiography*, *memoir*, *life writing*, *life narrative* and *life history*. I applied a table format to better illustrate the nuances of the terms (see Table 1.). Although my research will not focus on the various terms used for personal writing, it is helpful to have them as background knowledge. Other terms will be defined in context as needed. The term *narrative* and *story* can often be used interchangeably and the following exemplifies that occurrence:

The past couple of decades have witnessed an explosion of interest in narrative. As an account of what happened to particular people in particular circumstances and with specific consequences, stories are now viewed as a basic human strategy for coming to

terms with time, process, and change. (Herman, McHale, and Phelan 1, my emphasis)

Table 1
Definitions and Differences

Term	Similarities	Differences	Source
Narrative	Establishes connections between a series of events		“Narrative” def. 2a
Story	Narrative assumed true; term interchangeable with narrative	historical events and known people	“Story”
Narrative Theory	Assumes narrative is an inherent strategy people use to create meaning and studies narrative’s various structures.	Narrative theorists ...study how stories help people make sense of the world, while also studying how people make sense of stories	“Project Narrative”
Autobiography	Life account from an individual	Usually in book form	“Autobiography”
Memoirs	Events or history noted from the personal perspective of the author	Special information sources	(“Memoirs” def. 2a)
Life Writing	“Self-referential writing by a Life Narrator.”	Primary archival material	Smith & Watson 7
Life Narrative	Self-referential acts in various media	Film, visual, performative, digital	Smith & Watson 7
Life History	Oral histories to biographies are considered primary sources to study culture and history.	Relationships between local/national and is cross disciplinary	“Centre for Life History University of Sussex”

Meaning

Foundational to any study in composition is the notion of creating meaning. Beth Daniell suggests its importance when she states that our discipline is defined by “the belief that our central task is to help human beings use language—the one phenomenon that more than any other defines our identity—to create meaning” (“Theory”135). In this dissertation, I suggest that storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy are common to many students’ backgrounds and are some of the ways meaning is passed as part of their world reality, a reality worthy of academic research.

Shirley Brice Heath suggests meaning-making involves “developing theories about how the world works” through discussion that “engages beliefs [and] experience” (“Seeing”). Although schema theory, the role of a learner’s prior knowledge in acquiring new knowledge, has been prevalent since the 1970s, reforms in education often “do not build on the rich experience and legacies students bring to school” (Mcvee, Dunsmore, and Gavelek 531; Campano 1-2). However, Deborah Mutnick, a professor at Long Island University, has encouraged her students to explore their knowledge of the community through various assignments such as creating a photo-essay or becoming involved with the project “Our Legacies: What We Are, Where We’re From,” based on the 100th anniversary celebration of her son’s school in Brooklyn. Mutnick grasped the interrelatedness of “space and time, place and history” and wondered what caused the shifting demographics of the community over the years—from the founding Dutch, to the waves of Irish, German, Italian,

Polish, Latino/a, South Asian, African, and Muslim people (“Inscribing” 627-628). She perceived the physical building of the school as a “social narrative” with a continuous plethora of perspectives: “If we could read the legends scrawled on the stone, we might piece together these multifarious routes with particular sociohistorical forces that explain why, when, and how the newcomers arrived” (“Inscribing” 630). Story circles created an opportunity for the intergenerational, intercultural meeting of community members, school personnel, and college students to gather together to listen to memories. Oral histories were gathered and transcribed, and professionally created posters presented a public documentation of the legacies while signifying “the importance of everyday life, thereby ... entering them into the historical record” (“Inscribing” 639). Owens also had students collect local stories about places and people in his 21st Century Neighborhood Project (Mathieu 4). Building on learners’ prior knowledge as a way of knowing and encouraging academic research into such may enhance learners’ perception of themselves as belonging in an academic setting, especially when that knowledge is grounded meaningfully to real places familiar to them.

A “Quiet Revolution”

Compositionalists, in general, have a mindset to explore different venues and theories as they seek what works for students and what resonates with their own values. Theory today often has an activist agenda. Vincent B. Leitch, editor of *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, notes that theory now displays a skeptical attitude toward “systems, institutions, norms” revealing “blind spots,

contradictions, and distortions” which link a resistance activism through application to all local and global aspects of culture (“Preface” xxxiii-xxxiv). Activist agendas are common in composition. Mutnick encourages student writing as a means of encouraging marginalized voices and traces trends in support of that view: history written from the bottom up, the growth of oral history, post-colonial inquiries on representation and position, the expansion of the literary canon, and NCTE’s 1974 resolution on “The Student’s Right to Their own Language” (“Inscribing” 630). Theories influence our personal vision of the world, often lack objectivity, and can become an ideology directing our professional choices as educators and our personal decisions about the way we live our lives (Daniell, “Narratives” 393, 406). Pagnucci illustrates this concept in the title of his book, *Living the Narrative Life*.

Continuing inquiry into new ways of meaning, David Ian Hanauer, in *Poetry as Research: Exploring Second Language Poetry Writing*, notes changing research methods with his suggestion of the existence of a “quiet revolution,” which includes the cross-discipline application of “artistic methods of inquiry” within qualitative research (1). He advocates the writing of poetry as a viable research method in his field of applied linguistics and suggests the importance of a personal connection when he attributes the development of literacy to “the desire of the individual to express personally important understandings” (8). Writing of his class of second language learners, he states that poetry “allows me to give others a voice in a new language” or as a student put it, “Writing poetry and this class enable us to have our own voice and speak in English but with our

own mother tongue” (Hanauer 8). Muriel Rukeyser’s *Book of the Dead* is an early example of poetry presenting the human connection in an ethnographic portrayal of miners dying from lung cancer in West Virginia. In addition, Rich Furman writes poems of his work with disturbed children and considers the quality of self-reflection one of the strengths of poetry in auto-ethnographic research (Hanauer 4-5). Academics are exploring and presenting research in new ways.

I relate the search for answers to ever-changing challenges for compositionists to Bradford’s collage, mentioned in chapter one. Theories represent explorations and possibilities of what might work to meet various needs. Theory can be applied experientially, but theoretical discussions may not translate to practical application in the classroom. However, the field of composition studies seems particularly centered in a willingness to search for answers to help students, and the representations of found objects, like the collage, together create the whole picture.

Narrative

Interest in narrative and narrative theory is flourishing across the disciplines. Narrative theory studies the various ways people use narratives, or stories, to create meaning or to “make sense of the world” as well as how narratives operate to create meaning (“What Is Narrative?”). Jean-Francois Lyotard rejected the grand narratives of modernity—that humanity could “transform the world” and make all things new; urban renewal’s destruction of neighborhoods without consideration for the way people lived in those spaces

and created community portrays the failure of a modernist view that suggests the notion of a one truth fits all perspective (“Jean” 1610).

Meta narratives or master narratives can have a powerful influence because they are present everywhere especially in cultures, institutions, and governments where they are regarded as a canon and so receive continuing legitimacy (Klein 281). Lyotard states, “*postmodern* is incredulity toward master narratives” and focuses on celebrating diversity, especially at the local level; his *Postmodern Condition* is considered the “manifesto” of postmodernism (qtd. In Klein 282; Leitch 1609-1610). He calls for “*les petites histoires, little stories or local narratives*”—narratives that were short, not connected to the old master narratives, and “difficult to insert within it” (Klein 280). Daniell labels these “little narratives” and suggests they tie local culture to the composition classroom through “writing as a part of everyday life” (“Narratives” 405). This aspect of everyday life keys to students’ experiences, especially within their homes and communities. In order to lay the groundwork for narrative’s relevancy to life writing and through that to storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy, in this section, I explore narrative and its connections to composition studies.

Narrative, and in particular narrative structure, connects the ancient world and the cross-disciplinary, global twenty-first century. The study of narrative structure was practiced, albeit without modern labels, since ancient times (Booth and Phelan 1992). Aristotle wrote of narrative components in his *Poetics*, particularly the *peripetei*, “a sudden reversal in circumstances” (Hogan 67; Bruner 5). More recent interest in narrative structure is traced to the late

nineteenth-century Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and his study of language structure apart from its meaning (Pradl). Encouraged by Saussure's work, Claude Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, studied the function and structure of myths and noted that linear narrative time was not as important in myths as was the systematic repetitive patterns within the variations of myths across cultures. As a result, he linked structural linguistics with the analysis of kinship systems and reframed anthropology as a "study of Culture rather than cultures," thereby opening all aspects of "Culture" to all disciplines ("Claude" 1415-16).

In the early twentieth century, the study of narrative moved beyond Europe. Roman Jakobson—interested in languages, literature, and folklore—studied with Russian formalists through the Society for the Study of Poetic Language and eventually taught languages, literature, and linguistics at Harvard and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Lanshansky; "Roman" 1255). Tzvetan Todorov renewed interest in narrative and the Russian formalists and created the all-encompassing term for the study of narrative— *narratology*. Todorov searched literary works for common structures and patterns, especially systematic ones that created new knowledge in a scientific way ("Tzvetan" 2097-98). These early scholars were also acquainted with each other. For instance, Levi-Strauss, Jakobson, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Todorov, and Gerard Genette were all in Paris at the same time; Barthes directed Todorov's dissertation, suggested narrative as a topic of research to Genette, and also directed him into poetics ("Roland" 1458; "Tzvetan" 2097; Gorman). In addition,

Jacobson and Levi-Strauss were refugees in America during World War II and taught at the New School for Social Research in New York (“History”). In 1972, Genette would add the term *Narrative Discourse* with the publication of his book of the same title (Booth and Phelan 1992). Today, narrative interest supports an annual international conference, a plethora of internationally published articles and books, and the following journals: *Narrative*, *Journal of Narrative Theory* (the former *Journal of Narrative Technique*), *Narrative Inquiry*, and *Narrative Works*.

The broad application of narrative to today’s genres, methodologies, and conventions is attributed to structuralism. Russian Formalist Literary theory applied to a broad range of work from Tolstoy to fairy tales and was instrumental to the “narrative turn” which separated “theories of *narrative* from theories of the *novel*, and shift[ed] scholarly attention from a particular genre of literary writing to all discourse ... that can be construed as narratively organized” (Herman 5). James Phelan also credits structural narratology and its move from the “novel” to the more inclusive concept of “all narrative” as the impetus for broadening the field which would later make it available to various methodologies such as feminism, Marxism, and others (Booth and Phelan 1993). Finally, structuralists, in their quest for scientific order, created the sociological idea of “conventions” which is linked to linguistics, culture, literature, and society through discourse, all of which impacts the department of English Studies today (Leitch “Introduction” 5). The enormity of the narrative turn is suggested by other scholars who liken its “scope and significance to the linguistic turn in culture and philosophy one hundred years ago” (Herman, McHale, and Phelan 1).

Daniell captures a sense of the scope of narrative when she states that in today's world "knowledge is justified or legitimated through narrative" ("Narratives" 393). For instance, in *American Scientist* in 2005, Ronald Hoffman states that "all theories tell a story" and adds that when Albert Einstein first presented his theory of relativity, he did so as a narrative (qtd. in Jackson 8). Indeed, narrative is so common that even little children make sense of "puzzling circumstances" through story (Ochs and Capps 25; Bruner 32). However, the breadth of narrative application to all cultures is suggested by Hayden White, a historian, who states that narrative is so prevalent in most cultures that a problem exists only if narrative is absent from a culture. Historians apply narrative techniques to give meaning to data, to create organized accounts, to "translate chronicled facts as an aspect of plot," and to explain by "making stories out of mere *chronicles*" ("Hayden" 1710, 1714). Jerome Bruner, an American psychologist, adds to the sense of scope when he states, "stories are a culture's coin and currency" (15). F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin make a distinction between story as a life phenomenon and narrative as the means of inquiry: "Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" ("Stories" 2).

Narrative research is recognized across the disciplines as a "major text form" (Byler 331-332). David Herman, Brian McHale, and James Phelan, editors of *Teaching Narrative Theory* published in 2010, note the explosive interest in narrative and that it is a "key concern" in a variety of disciplines such as

“[s]ociolinguistics, discourse analysis, communications studies, history, and philosophy ... cognitive and social psychology, ethnography, sociology, media studies, artificial intelligence, medicine, business, and jurisprudence” (1). To this list, David Herman, editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, adds the fields of “education ... political thought and policy analysis, health research ... [and] theology” (4). Of particular note is the absence, on both lists, of English Studies, unless it is included under the guise of “communication studies.”

Narrative study may be undervalued in the discipline because of its “oral and informal” associations or because it is “the discourse of fairy tales, dinner conversation, pillow talk” (Barton and Barton qtd. in Byler 330; Briggs and Woolbright *xii*). However, Pagnucci cautions colleagues that choosing to emphasize narrative has political consequences of possible marginalization. He also notes the lack of support which can “disempower and disenfranchise people dedicated to the study and creation of narrative scholarship” and adds that the lack of support comes from conservative to liberal scholars (*Living* 1, 14). Mutnick asserts that the academy is not a “neutral free zone that fosters critical thinking and self-criticism” but rather a “key site for the reproduction of the dominant culture” (“On the Academic” 191). In addition, Robert Wallace, a former doctoral student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), in his dissertation, *This Wild Strange Place: Local Narratives of Literacy Use in Appalachian Families over Three Generations*, discusses West Virginia literacy and stories yet feels the need to explain his use of story in his dissertation: “I am not abandoning academic writing; I am trying to start a conversation” (2). Part of that

conversation now might include Laurel Richardson who presents her interview research data in poetic form (Hanauer 5). However, faculty attitudes toward narrative in composition can also be problematic. Ruo-Wan Lei, also of IUP, in her 2012 dissertation, *A Case Study of a Taiwanese Teachers' Group Exploring Narrative Pedagogy*, notes that while proficiency in English was not “crucial” for Taiwanese students to apply narrative writing, the “anti-narrative views of the teachers” did play “a crucial role.” Narrative has been slow to gain practical acceptance in the field of composition. However, narrative and composition studies have a history together.

American composition studies developed from ancient classical rhetoric; the medieval trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and argument; and the prescriptive, rules-centered position taken by Harvard in the nineteenth century. However, the trickledown effect of Harvard professor Francis James Child’s focus on literature affected composition from the 1800s to World War II. Child, known today for his preeminent work collecting ballads, was Boylston professor of rhetoric and oratory at Harvard College and more interested in literature than composition. The prompts for Harvard’s entrance essay reflected that literary interest as did the expectation of the way the essay should be written. These expectations trickled down to secondary education teachers and students—a classic case of teaching to the test. With Child’s focus on literature, both composition and rhetoric regressed at Harvard (Classical).

Nationally, the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) was formed in 1911 to begin a separation of composition and literature which was

accomplished by World War II. In 1949, the Conference on College Composition and Communication was formed to address freshman writing. Seventeen years later, in 1966, the MLA and the NCTE held a conference at Dartmouth resulting in a move away from the old rules-centered model to a more expressivist focus developing student voice (Classical). It could be argued the connection to literature exposed students to various forms of narrative which would give a history of more than three hundred years; however, the move to develop the writer's voice incorporated the personal narrative, the development of which is noted later in this chapter. Today, narrative scholarship is increasing in the field of composition studies as the following will demonstrate.

Scholars use narrative as a means to explore the teaching experience; however, narrative is also a means for underrepresented groups to enter the conversation, often through relating their autobiographical experiences. The decade of the 1980s saw a variety of work. Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, published in 1982, is an autobiography relating his journey to a Ph.D. as a son of Mexican-American parents. Published the following year, Heath's *Ways With Words: Language and Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms* explores home/school literacy connections in the white community of Roadville and the black community of Trackton. In 1987, Gloria Anzaldua published *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* in which she tells the story of growing up in the borderlands and the cultural borders for women and for lesbians. North acknowledges the power of story and foresees its importance to the profession but limits it to the oral tradition

within “practitioner” knowledge in his 1987 seminal work, *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. In his discussion of “practitioner” knowledge as composition *lore*, he notes that *lore* is usually oral, represents “communal knowledge ... in story form,” plays “a central role in the practitioner community,” and “represents the community’s lifeblood, its most vital essence” (32-33). In 1989, Mike Rose published *Lives on the Boundaries: The Struggles and Achievements of America’s Underprepared*, which tells the story of the needs of underprepared students and his own journey from an underprivileged, working class background.

In the final decade of the twentieth century, books on narrative and teaching experience appeared. Now noted for their work in narrative, Connelly and Clandinin published “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry” in the *Educational Researcher* and the following year, Keith Gilyard’s *Voices of the Self: A Study of Language Competence*, a work that combines autobiography and scholarly analysis, was published. In 1992, David Schaafsma published *Eating on the Streets*, a study at the Dewey Center in Chicago of teachers and students both learning to share stories and learning through story. *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*, published in 1993, is the story of Victor Villanueva’s journey from a Puerto Rico culture in New York to academia. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* by bell hooks was published in 1994 in which she raises issues of sexuality and racism in the classroom. In 1997, Trimmer published *Narration Is Knowledge*, a collection of teaching tales, as did Wendy Bishop with *Teaching Lives: Essays and Stories*.

That same year Connors uses story terminology in *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy* in which he describes composition educators as “storytellers”:

I am trying here to build a fire around which we can sit and discover that we do know the same stories, and dance the same dances. Historians may not be the shamans of the field, but we are the storytellers, spinning the fabric that will, we hope, knit together the separate, private stories of the researchers, the theorists, the teachers in the classroom. (18)

Although Connors reflects story terminology and acknowledges separate, private stories, he invokes the sense of a master narrative in his assumption that all educators experience the “same stories...same dances” mentioned above. In 1999 in “What I Learned in Grad School, or Literary Training and the Theorizing of Composition” in *College Composition and Communication*, Patrick Bizzaro notes the importance of stories, concludes that composition’s story has been presented from an institutional perspective, and sounds a call to action for “stories which tell through personal narrative the tale of our profession” (“What” 736-37).

The twenty-first century introduced Richard H. Haswell and Min Zhan Lu’s *Comp Tales: An Introduction to College Composition Through Its Stories* and Connelly and Clandinin’s *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. In 2004, Pagnucci published *Living the Narrative Life: Stories as a Way of Meaning Making*, in which he advocates life as personal and academic

stories; his book reflects academic scholarship which includes poems and stories. In 2007, Pagnucci and Nick Mauriello published *Re-Mapping Narrative: Technology's Impact on the Way We Write* and, in 2008, Benie Colvin notes in her dissertation, *Passing the Story: A Study of Personal Memoirs—Letters, Recipes, and Quilts*, that narrative research is gaining “credibility” (7). In 2011, two books—*On Narrative Inquiry: Approaches to Language* by Schaafsma et al. and *Literacy and Narrative Acts: Rhetoric, Race and Identity, Knowledge Research and Teaching in Rhetoric and Composition* edited by Debra Journet, Beth Boehm, and Cynthia Britt—were published.

Although this listing is not a definitive one, it does represent the growing relationship between composition and narrative study. Dissertations and theses in composition also reflect the growing interest in narrative study and composition studies. A search of *ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis* with the search terms “narrative OR narrative study” combined with “college composition and communication” netted a total of 1,418 responses for all dates of which 796 were written in the past five years. Interest in narrative in composition is increasing.

However, 2012 seems to be the year of narrative/story recognition and acceptance for professional organizations which affect composition studies. The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) has called for members' stories to create the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN) with the purpose of gathering information about how and where people learn to “read, write, and compose meaning” and as a means to “compose a notable piece of our collective identity” (Adams). In addition, Malea Powell notes the pervasive application of

narrative in her 2012 address as incoming president at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC): “We have no being beyond our stories. Our stories explain us, justify us, sustain us, humble us, and forgive us” (Adams). The National Council for Teachers of English 2014 convention’s theme, “Story as the Landscape of Knowing,” opened presentation opportunities to various aspects of story as texts, cultures, genres, memories, professional experiences and knowledge, literacies, scholarly collaborations, and identity: “story as literary and informational text, story as cross-disciplinary collaborations, story as multiple literacies and genres, story as memory and identity, story as teacher knowledge and research, story as community and culture, story as marginalization, and story as resistance” (Short). The field of composition studies is gradually recognizing the application of narrative, professionally, as a rich storehouse of data, as a means of identity, and as an account of being. As part of narrative theory, stories are essential to making meaning for it is a “central premise that we need to exchange stories with each other in order to make sense of our worlds” (Pagnucci, *Living* 3).

In addition, students, as well as the general public, are invited to join a narrative conversation by submitting their essays on core values and beliefs to *This I Believe, Inc.* a website based on a radio broadcast from the 1950s hosted by Edward R. Murrow. The website has archived more than 125,000 essays; some are selected to be presented on various broadcasts on National Public Radio. The website lists essay guidelines for middle school students, high school students, college students, and lifelong learners as well as for community groups

and houses of worship (*This*). Although the academy is learning to trust the intentions of a colleague when using narrative, faculty do not extend the same trust to the personal narratives from students (Robillard 75). Indeed, Mutnick declares that “social inequalities and linguistic prejudices” are reinforced for students (“On” 192). The application of narrative for composition educators has been one of slow growth; the application of narrative for students in the form of the personal essay has been chaotic and filled with criticism.

Expressivism

The field has a history of questioning the academic veracity of the personal, especially expressivism, which has been subject to vitriolic controversy for more than forty years. Originating in literary theory, expressive theory emphasizes the writer’s “inner soul” and, in composition studies, centers on the development of the writer’s voice, growth, and discovery of inner truth based on the writer’s experience as portrayed in a personal essay (Leitch “Introduction” 4). Expressive theory builds from an almost intuitive experience into theory, a process which is “complex” and similar to grounded theory (Burnham, “Expressive” 21). Peter Elbow has been considered a spokesperson for Expressivism by many of his colleagues. However, Donald C. Jones likens Elbow’s work to John Dewey’s stand against foundationalism and his principles of pragmatism: “primacy of experience, the construction of knowledge, the influence of language on thought, and the achievement of agency” (266-269). Although the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) lists “expressive” as an adjective

and does not list “expressivism,” the latter term is often used interchangeably with “expressionism.”

In this section, I will trace Expressivism’s development, criticisms, and decline and renewal. An understanding of Expressivism is necessary to this research because of its relationship to the personal essay, an aspect of life writing and narrative writing; because Expressivism has had such a negative press; and because of its central role in learning and modern composition studies. As Linda Lonon Blanton, author of “Discourse, Artifacts, and the Ozarks: Understanding Academic Literacy,” states, “To place writing at the heart of learning, as a mode of learning—formal or otherwise—is to concede a powerful role to the experiential/expressive” (229).

An interest focused on the writer is ancient. James Kinneavy, in “Expressive Discourse,” traces expressive roots through Johann Gottfried Herder and Jean Jacques Rousseau in the eighteenth-century, Giambattista Vico in seventeenth-century Italy, and Epicurus and Lucretius in the Roman world (381). Stephen M. Fishman, a philosophy professor, builds cross-disciplinary references to German Romanticism and likens Elbow’s emphasis on a shared academic conversation to Herder’s interest in finding a common ground, despite diversity. Herder had been Kant’s student and a mentor to Goethe and was considered the originator of the doctrine of the artist’s social responsibility for and personal need to acknowledge “the truth of his own experience” (Isaiah Berlin qtd. in Fishman and McCarthy (650-651). In resistance to the rule-focused genres of Neoclassicism, Romanticism emphasizes the individual person. Raymond Williams, author of

Culture and Society: 1780-1950, suggests that English Romantic poets added to the image of the isolated writer through the changes that distanced the relationship between the poet and his or her audience in English society. The move from the patronage system to reader subscription to publishers combined with the English poets' resistance to the industrial revolution and to mass marketing added to the Romantic writer's isolationist image and mystique. German Romantics also resisted industrialization but, by the late 1800s, Herder chose to embrace "folk art and the vernacular" while "English poets were estranged from popular taste" (Leitch 12; Fishman and McCarthy 653).

In its heyday in the 1960s and early 1970s, Expressivism was considered an alternative, a "fringe movement," to the current-traditional rhetoric which emphasized the product of the writing and its mechanical correctness, a process which "inevitably produced—the canned, dull, lifeless student essay that seemed the logical outcome of a rules-driven, teacher-centered curriculum" (Burnham, "Expressive" 28; Tobin, "Process" 5). At this time, education was pressured by reaction to the Russian launch of Sputnik in 1957, by the influx of veterans and non-traditional students taking advantage of higher education's open admissions policies, by student riots, and by students equating writing to "enemy" status controlling an individual's voice (Newkirk qtd. in Tobin, "Process" 4). Although Expressivism began as a marginal movement, it resonated with the new student body so that the common sense and voice and presence of ordinary people became mainstreamed.

Professors questioned the supposed simplicity of writing in an effort to understand and to teach it. Ken Macrorie railed against stilted academic language or “Engfish” as he called it, and wanted “good writing” from his students which he defined as “clear, vigorous, honest, alive, sensuous, appropriate, unsentimental, rhythmic, without pretension, fresh, metaphorical, evocative in sound, economical, authoritative, surprising, memorable, and light,” any of which would be an accomplishment for first-year learners then or now (299, 311).

Donald M. Murray explored writing as a process in his essay, “Teaching Writing as a Process” which became the “manifesto” for the writing process movement; a movement considered “revolutionary” at the time (Tobin, “Foreward” xx). Later, some perceived the writing process as synonymous with expressionism through freewriting and collaborative group work (Ballenger 299; Tobin, “Process” 7).

Elbow’s *Writing Without Teachers* and *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process* added to the emphasis on the importance of the individual writer’s voice. North, in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, divided composition into three sections, each with a different focus: Practitioners, Technicians, and Researchers. Those he labeled “Practitioners” are now known as Expressivists and include Murray, Elbow, and Macrorie, among others. North attributed to them the tracking of composition *lore*: “the accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs in terms of which Practitioners understand how writing is done, learned, and taught” (22-23). *Lore* is usually oral, often epic, and told through particular tellers. North identifies Mina Shaughnessy, whose seminal work— *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the*

Teachers of Basic Writing— revolutionized academic thinking on error, as one of the “special storytellers” (32).

Criticisms

Criticism grew, especially with the development of composition as a field separate from literature. In 1982 in “Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories,” James A. Berlin compares four major pedagogies and states that “expressivism” is a “disruptive” dialectic requiring the “abandonment of long held conventions and opinions” and precedes his analysis with a dire warning to instructors of “disastrous consequences” if teachers do not apply a theory that serves the “best interest” of the students, which he suggests is rhetorical theory as the “most intelligent and most practical alternative” (“Contemporary” 771, 766).

Other critics consider Expressivism “meaningless,” “not a real category,” “naïve,” and limiting students’ academic development (Harris qtd. in Elbow “Some”; Bizzell qtd. in Fishman and McCarthy 648). Others feel the personal essay “too easy” because students are familiar with autobiography or “too hard” because students lack sufficient life experience (Tobin, “Process” 11; Tobin, “Reading” 74). Expressivism has been held responsible for edging out rhetorical influence in composition: “[c]omposition’s spin-off concern with [personal expression] and self-discovery are what really did rhetoric in—and what still compete with rhetoric every time” (Farris). Expressivism is also blamed for the lack of a central theory uniting composition to a liberal education: “[T]he nearly universal expressivist assumptions about the ‘self’ and about the nature of

personal experience ... prevent us from explaining (theorizing) the centrality of composition to the intellectual work of 'delivering' a liberal education" (France 147). Teaching methodologies often added fuel to the critical fire for they ranged from "totally accepting and non-directive" to activities designed to develop the student writer (Fulkerson "Four" 432).

In addition to criticism, Expressivist writing was marginalized. For instance, Donald Murray's work related to teaching and expressivism incorporated a variety of genres and was rejected for years as "quaint," although he later was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Journalism and authored ten books (Ballenger 297). By 1999, Bishop notes in "Places to Stand: The Reflective Writer-Teacher in Composition" that composition professionals were "currently trained to distance themselves" from expressivists (10). I concur, for at that time, I had had three years of various composition courses as an undergraduate and graduate student during which time expressivists were treated as passé, trivial, or relegated to the basic writing course pedagogy. The academic rejection was so strong that I never read expressivist writing until recently. Bishop points to Elbow's and Murray's writing in particular as a model of scholarly writing which also exemplifies "casual, personal reflective writing ... [a model] young compositionists are not encouraged to follow" ("Places" 13). Criticism continues to this day. In the 2002 "Foreward" to *Moving Beyond Academic Discourse: Composition Studies and the Public Sphere*, Gary A. Olson, in his paean of praise for composition's move to public writing which represents "[c]herished values" to "real" audiences, notes disparagingly that that move is "an implicit

critique of those pedagogies that center on teaching students to ‘express’ their inner feelings and not to ‘worry’ about audience, to write principally ‘for one’s self’” (ix).

Expressive Decline and Renewal

Today, because aspects of Expressivism and the process movement were considered synonymous, Expressivism was affected by criticism aimed at the process movement’s lack of recognition for context. Post-process theory suggests that “no codifiable or generalizable writing process exists or could exist” and, because the use of language involves others, each instance is never the same and thus not subject to strictures (Kent 1-2). The context for Expressionism could include personal perspectives and classifications of identity such as race and gender and class. It could also include mastery of academic discourse, the varying influences on the writer’s discourse, a focus on capitalism, and a resistance mentality to “being controlled and manipulated by the dominant languages of the culture” (Tobin, “Process” 12; Berlin qtd. Tobin, “Process” 12-13). The social turn in composition studies signaled the demise of active Expressivism (Robillard 77). Textbooks also contributed to a perception of a regimented writing process while others advocated a “too touchy-feely” writing process; however, all faced a criticism of not teaching the needed aspects of academic discourse: audience, grammar, editing (Tobin, “Process” 11). However, Expressive influence is apparent in textbooks where invention techniques such as freewriting, journaling, and collaborative writing groups are now standard; it is also apparent in the emphasis on voice which is still apropos, especially with the

publication in 2012 of Elbow's *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* (Burnham, "Expressive" 19; Elbow, "Foreward" *xii*). In addition, Expressivism continues in courses such as feminism and alternative genres (Fulkerson, "Composition" 666; Kent 9).

Personal Essay

The legacy of the personal essay is tainted not only through its forty-year association with Expressivism and its criticism. Personal essays are linked with underprepared students as well as with problems with objectivity, vernacular language, and emotionality. Writing in 1983, Rose notes that expanded assignments in a remedial course usually involved topics that are "personal and simple" although intended to be "relevant and accessible" ("Remedial" 104). An online syllabus for English writing skills seems representative with its emphasis on the difference between personal and academic writing: "The focus will be on writing essays and learning how to edit them in preparation for the college's Basic Writing/English Composition courses, with a transition from personal to academic essays" (Lizotte).

In 1991, Elbow observes the troubling balance between academic discourse and that of writing beyond the academy. He notes that "discourse carries power" and if we fail to prepare students for academic writing we're "shortchanging" them, especially underprepared or first-generation students; however, he adds on the other hand, students have to *unlearn* academic discourse to enter the reality of the work world and the reality of a personal world

where they might want to “write stories or poems for themselves” or to render the discourse of experience (“Reflections” 135; 136).

Although personal essays are frequently the first essay assignment in the first year composition course, some educators understand the narrative application beyond the first year of college. In addition, students may be told that personal narratives will “limit their access to power and empowerment,” yet students observe the power of narrative in the world around them through advertising and political and religious influences (Tobin, “Foreward” ix). Marcia Baxter Magolda, after studying college students for eight years, many of whom struggled with graduate work, notes that the students “would have been better prepared for these [early interpersonal, career, and citizenship] roles, and have struggled less, had the conditions for self-authorship been created during their college experience” (qtd. in Broad 3). However, it is Gary Tate at Texas Christian University who suggests personal narrative’s link to lifelong learning: “Our students’ ability to compose personally meaningful writing *beyond* the curriculum is far more important than their ability to compose academic writing *across* the curriculum” (qtd. in Heilker 266). The reputation of the personal essay has suffered at the hands of Expressivism’s critics through its association with basic writing assignments and academic thinking that separates personal writing and academic writing.

In addition, academic discourse is usually perceived as objective while personal essays are considered subjective. However, objectivity depends on who defines and approves it. For instance, academic objectivity has represented a

single perspective such that a scientific narrative might represent the historical perspective of a white male from the middle to upper class; some educators consider objectivity a “political act” with the power “that silences other voices and perspectives” (Kent 11). Elbow suggests the absurdity of a pureness in either objectivity or subjectivity and advocates a balance between objectivity, with its “clear claims, reason, and evidence,” and subjectivity, with its passionate awareness of one’s own position, as well as how others might view the issue (“Reflections” 141). That balance is not easy to achieve. In “Blurred Voices: Who Speaks for the Subaltern?” Norma Gonzales points to the confusion of the image painted by academic discourse of “a normative culture out there somewhere” and adds that because her own experience within her community was “subjective, I felt it could not be accurate” (320). Wanting to avoid stereotypical descriptions of gangs and drugs, she describes the Mexican culture she knows in Tucson as a “nurturing web of familial alliances and friendship ... where the past slips effortlessly into the present”—a community based on respect stretching back to a Spanish heritage and “priests and peons” (322). Her insider knowledge of her community was at odds with the academic demands of writing about her community: “I had stripped my own subjectivity of any validity. I had begun to view the processes of everyday life as getting in the way of analysis, rather than being at the heart of analysis” (324). Her experience would resonate with that of many of my students.

Vernacular language use also poses a problem, especially when associated with the personal essay. Although the definition of what is acceptable

academic language has progressed from “only Latin” to other European dialects to generic everyday language, instances of the vernacular cause some academics more anxiety than “changes in ideas or content or doctrine” (Elbow, “Reflections” 151). Indeed, Amy D. Clark in her dissertation, *We Are Our Mothers' Words: The Vernacular Literacy Practices of Three Generations of Central Appalachian Women*, suggests that teachers are “unwilling to address the chasm between students’ vernacular and academic literacies” (178). Although Elbow adds academic work can be done using street language or the vernacular which may reveal if the student is doing “real academic work or just using academic jive,” he also warns of a shallowness when students learn to “mimic” academic discourse, becoming “seduced or preoccupied” with surface details (“Reflections” 149).

Lisa Delpit takes a different tack when she argues that it is essential to teach students whatever they need to produce a product that will reflect “the patterns, interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society” (“The Silenced” 287, 285). Yet, in order for students to learn, it is necessary for the classroom to become a “safe environment” where risk taking for independent thought and frank speech is encouraged because vernacular literacies are not always welcome in the classroom (Freedman 1057; Clark 175). Delpit adds that learners’ home language is “vital to their perception of self and sense of community connectedness” (“The Politics” 553). In her study of Appalachian women in college, Clark agrees with Delpit and calls for academic respect for the

vernacular so that a woman “can return to the voice place whenever she wishes without shame, without regret, and without apology for her identity” (179). With that respect, the classroom can become a bridge for local and vernacular literacies—a “place of contact where academic and vernacular ‘meet, clash, and grapple with each other’” (Clark 175; Pratt cited in Clark 178). With that respect and with understanding, first-year learners can add to their “repertoires” as they become aware of the voice of the vernacular and the voice of the academy (Delpit, “The Politics” 553).

Although many academics shun emotion in writing and emphasize objectivity, stories can invoke emotions. Kinneavy suggests a balance of emotion and academic writing. He influenced many scholars in composition and rhetoric through the Ph.D. program he founded at the University of Texas at Austin. In his “definitive” book, *A Theory of Discourse: The Aims of Discourse*, published in 1971, Kinneavy recognizes emotion as integral to language and thought and also to human accomplishment as a motivating force (S. Miller 372). He posits an emotional aspect to discourse through the emotional part of the self which influences thought and language:

Since it is by language that man finds both his self and his thoughts [sic], and since self is emotionally grounded, it follows that all discourse is emotionally grounded. The reason for this is that man uses language to achieve the projects which he values, and the desire for the project has an emotional component. (381)

Kinneavy suggests a balanced discourse with the expressive an aspect of most discourse. He suggests any speaker/writer has a personal perspective that influences the material—whether it is simply passing information or of an argumentative, a scientific, or a literary nature. He adds that not all emotional experience or language can be “neatly parceled out into persuasion and literature” (372-373). The topic of emotion is still part of academic discussion on writing today.

Personal stories can touch emotions which can affect learning, according to Fishman and McCarthy who stress the importance of an emotional link to learning for students (Fishman and McCarthy 654). However, the academy does not deal well with emotion (Elbow *Writing* 309). Hindman, editor of the special issue of *College English*, the Personal in Academic Writing, adds, “We’ve been trained to see the authors’ revelations of their personal stories or emotions as self-indulgent at worst, irrelevant at best” (11). Narratives, Pagnucci comments, “make emotional connections for us. Thus as I’ve written story after story, I’ve found my emotions being opened up onto the page. Again, this flies in the face of the cool reserve of the academy, the intellectual discourse on abstract issues of import” (*Living* 29).

The academy values studies, analysis of texts, and critical theorizing, and “assumes abstract, highly theoretical writing is necessarily superior to clear and accessible narrative” (Tobin, “Foreward” ix-x). However, writing a personal essay or narrative does not mean abandoning academic conventions, although for some academic classes, standards such as a “clear argumentative thesis” may

be put “on the back burner” (Fulkerson, “Composition” 666). Hindman points out that for work to be accepted by a publication authors should be familiar with the scholarly equivalent of its writer’s guidelines such as the publication’s audience and its reading level in addition to the publication history of the topic in the proposed periodical (10). She observes that some of her colleagues’ submissions for the edition lacked a sense of the “necessities” of good writing such as the inclusion of a thesis sentence and the understanding of writing for the particular audience represented by the readers of the journal; she adds personal writing is not “free” of restraint and requirements (9-10). Hindman’s comments reveal that misconceptions about personal writing are not limited to first-year learners. However, first-year learners are just that—learners—and the first-year writing course is the place to learn writing constraints and conventions while coming to terms with a variety of audiences, topics, voices, and stances. The personal essay is an appropriate vehicle for first-year learners to do so in narrative ways of knowing.

Scholars are increasingly and intentionally writing in narrative ways of knowing. Their work is published in scholarly journals of the field, addresses a topic in depth, is written from a personal perspective, and would serve as models for undergraduate or graduate students. Douglas Hesse in “The Place of Creative Non-Fiction” cites Wendy Bishop, Helen Malinowitz, Bronwyn Williams, Robert Root, and Lynn Bloom as writers who support the genre and also represent it (240). Powell and Resa Bizzaro, among others, are also examples of the scholarly writer relating material from a personal point of view and from an

underrepresented group. Bizzaro writes with scholarly attention and references and a personal perspective in her essays, “Making Places as Teacher-Scholars in Composition Studies: Comparing Transition Narratives” in the 2002 edition of *College Composition and Communication* and “Shooting Our Last Arrow: Developing a Rhetoric of Identity for Unenrolled American Indians” published in 2004 in *College English*. Her memoir-like prose establishes a strong, authoritative personal voice in addition to the authority of her personal experience. *Reflections: A Journal of Public Rhetoric, Civic Writing and Service-Learning* is another example of scholarly writing that can also include a personal perspective. It is a peer-reviewed publication that welcomes submissions from students, community members, and scholars. Despite criticism and struggles with voice and emotion, the personal essay has survived and may even begin to thrive under the auspices of life writing.

Life Writing

In this section, I briefly review life writing in order to establish storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy as an aspect of the life experience of first-year composition students. Life writing is self-referential writing where the author is a life-narrator writing about the self or another and using primary archival materials such as letters, interviews, and the historical events of the time (Smith and Watson 7). Terms associated with life writing include biography, autobiography, memoir, and life narrative. Additional terms associated with life writing reveal the breadth of its application: “biography, hagiography ... testimonio, diary, oral history, genealogy, [and] group biography” (Fuchs and Howes 1).

Although Expressivist writing or personal writing roused deep and lasting emotions for and against it, the attitude toward life writing is a different story. Various influences may account for that difference. Interest in one's life is ancient, world-wide, and portrayed in various forms, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, authors of *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, note. Oral life narratives recounted deeds of individuals and genealogies of indigenous cultures; in addition, self-inscribed writing is noted 2,000 years ago in China and spread during the next millennium to Japan, Islamic-Arabic areas, and India. Instances of self-referential writing through the centuries include funeral orations, letters, spiritual autobiographies, lyrical sonnets, essays, travel narratives, books, journals, and diaries. From the eighteenth century on, literacy and printing contributed to the growth of life writing for new audiences and their interests; some examples of the new venues for narrative included slave narratives, self-help books, reflections on nature and self, and political manifestos (103-120).

Additionally, a personal essay may conjure up school critiques and negative memories. A life narrative may appeal to people because of its flexibility. It can be long or short, formal or informal, written for an immediate audience on the web or privately for oneself, focused on minutia or a broad theme...or not. The control of how one's life is presented is in the hands of the author not the academy. As such, life writing is a popular movement with an ancient impulse.

The literature-based professional organization, the Modern Language Association (MLA), responded to a thirty-year track record of interest in life writing by creating the Division on Autobiography, Biography, and Life Writing in 1991 and by sponsoring a conference session at that time (Fuchs and Howes 1). When a critique of the autobiographical canon found it highly selective and exclusionary in its authors and topics, the genre autobiography expanded into written discourse addressing the influences of power on writing, on history, and on individual and community identities. The move beyond the limiting sense of *autobiography* and *memoir* should expand the field, according to Smith and Watson, with the resulting “encyclopedic” scholarship (2-3; 5).

In 1999, the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA) was formed, and now narrative links are present in Austria, Australia, Africa, Brazil, Canada, China, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Centers include the *Center for Biographical Research* at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, *CNR: The Centre for Narrative Research* at the University of East London, the *Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research* at the University of Sussex, and *Project Narrative* at Ohio State University. However, Miriam Fuchs and Craig Howes' *Teaching Life Writing Texts* published by MLA in 2008 placed life writing in the academic mainstream (Podnieks). Self-referential narrative applies across disciplines as a means of archiving information and managing knowledge.

Life writing is pertinent to the field of composition and to issues in this century. Elizabeth Podnieks, in reviewing *Teaching Life Writing*, lifts life writing out

of the MLA literature classification when she suggests a broader application of the book to the field of writing studies, for the book contains the “most significant topics driving writing studies . . . identity, subjectivity, theory, agency, history, and representation.” These topics are similar to the Council of Writing Program Administrator’s (WPA) 21st century list of challenges mentioned earlier: “identity, authorship, multiculturalism, literacy definitions, and home literacies” (Grimm, *Good xiii*). Topics in life writing expand further in Smith and Watson’s appendix, which lists sixty genres of life writing from “Academic Life Writing” to “Witnessing.” Some of these genres include narratives based on war, trauma, survivorship, travel, spiritual life, ethnic life, digital life, self-help, prison, genealogical stories, and food stories (253-286). Life writing has enormous content, complexity, and potential.

However, life writing has moved beyond the simple to the complex (S. Smith, “Who’s” 393). For instance, Smith and Watson expand the concepts of “Memory,” “Experience,” “Identity,” “Space,” “Embodiment,” and “Agency” and apply them to analyzing life writing (21-61; 64). Each of these concepts is a major genre and their interplay complex. Indeed, Pagnucci and Mauriello suggest the complexity of life writing is beyond traditional areas of research and calls for an “academic heteroglossia” of cross-disciplinary voices to address the new knowledge that will be generated (*Re-Mapping* 8). As such, it may be too multifaceted and broad for first-year students and the objectives of the first-year composition (FYC) course.

Departmental outcomes for the first-year composition course and time constraints also influence the scope of life writing application in FYC. The first-year composition course is accepted by most educators as teaching “the preeminent

intellectual skills of the university: critical and creative thinking, as well as interpretation, revision, and negotiation of texts and of the knowledge those texts are used to create” (Broad 3). Frequently, colleges use the outcomes developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) in 2000 and updated in 2008. Headings on the WPA Outcomes Statement include Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing; Processes; Knowledge of Conventions; and Composition in Electronic Environments. As an adjunct instructor, I was required to create a folder each semester for each class taught (usually five classes for fulltime adjuncts, the position which I held) documenting every assignment and test question to show the link to department outcomes for the course and supporting each assignment and test with student work reflecting successful instruction of the particular outcomes. Educators are pressed for time.

Habitus

Although life writing may be too broad an application for the first-year composition class, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy constitute a narrowed focus, a particular aspect of life writing, especially when screened through the term *geography*. In this section, I review *habitus* and examine aspects of geography’s growing relationship with composition including sustainability, place-based knowledge, and identity.

Connecting culture and composition work to geography is Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*: “The habitus is a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are ‘regular’ without consciously coordinated or

governed by any ‘rule’” (Thompson 12). Carl A Maida in *Sustainability and Communities of Place* condenses *habitus* to “the bundle of conventions and habitual ways and perceptions that order lives in particular times” (3). Bourdieu focuses on the influence of power on linguistic development and exchanges.

Although initially influenced by Levi-Strauss, in the 1960s Bourdieu became disenchanted with structuralism and with linguists’ intellectual examination of language without an accompanying consideration of the historical, social, and political influences at work on any linguistic exchange. His notion of *habitus* reflects his concern regarding those influences affecting behaviors and attitudes which predisposition people to respond in particular ways. Bourdieu attributes individual actions, tastes, and goals to the influence of *habitus* (Thompson 12 -17). Nedra Reynolds expands on this concept when she suggests composition and literacy theories should develop a deeper awareness of *place* and, she adds, places can be created or duplicated by “practices, structures of feeling, and sedimented features of *habitus*” (*Geographies* 2). As literacy educators, we teach language and writing in ways that can be applied practically in other courses. However, the concept of *habitus* suggests an understanding beyond linguistic structure, an understanding that might help learners explore the various influences in their backgrounds.

Geography and Composition

I chose to ground my research in geography as a terministic screen, a term that concentrates and limits the way material is viewed, because of geography’s growing relationship with composition and because it is common

ground to *[re]storying the commons*. Although Marilyn Cooper's "The Ecology of Writing" was published in 1986 and Reynolds' "Composition's Imagined Geographies: The Politics of Space in the Frontier, City, and Cyberspace" was published in *College Composition and Communication* eight years later, interest in composition and geography, and its offshoot, ecocomposition, has grown in the twenty-first century. Geographic terms such as "margins," "barriers," "bridges," and "center," are commonly used to illustrate concepts metaphorically. However, at the 1999 Conference on College Composition and Communication ecocomposition was included in only one round table discussion. Since that time, a special interest group formed—the Association for the Study of Literacy and the Environment (ASLE). By 2002, the team of Sidney I. Dobrin and Christian R. Weissner published *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches* and *Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*. They also called for acceptance of ecocomposition as a sub-discipline of English Studies and for the acceptance of ecological and environmental issues as part of composition theory in "Breaking Ground in Ecocomposition: Exploring Relationships Between Discourse and Environment" in *College English* (567). In 2004, Reynolds authored *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*. Interest continues today. For instance, Kathleen Blake Yancey recently placed a "Call for Proposals" for a special themed book on *Locations of Writing* planned for 2014 publication (Adams).

In *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*, Reynolds approaches geography as a cultural geographer and focuses on the

material aspects of culture and on political use of power. She asks how “material artifacts are appropriated and their meanings transformed through oppositional social practices” and questions “both emotional and physiological attachments to places and space” (*Geographies* 57). She differentiates between the work of a cultural geographer, who focuses on a “social and built environment,” and that of an eco-compositionalist, whose work is linked to the natural world (*Geographies* 4). The concepts of cultural geography in first-year composition, especially a one-semester composition class, may seem overwhelming to incoming students; however, most students could apply their own knowledge of geography themes because most have had a course in geography since it became a core subject in *Goals 2000* and *No Child Left Behind*.

In 1981, the Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education established geographic themes (Location, Place, Human Environment Interactions, Movement, and Regions) to organize geographic knowledge in schools (Salter 10-12). In 1991, to portray the all-encompassing depth of the field and to promote world-class geographic knowledge, the Geographic Education Standards Project expanded the themes into six Essential Elements: The World in Spatial Terms, Places and Regions, Physical Systems, Human Systems, Environment and Society, and Uses of Geography, which includes analyzing the past and projecting for the future (Marran 20-22). The Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education at Texas State University, which is linked to the National Geographic Society, boils down its definition of geography to “the study of the interaction between, people,

places, and the environment,” a general phrase that should resonate with most students (*Why*).

Place-Based Knowledge

Although geography connects to all aspects of human life, human emotions and histories are particularly evoked by place. Place also creates links to storytelling, folklore and heritage literacy. Reynolds likens places to a palimpsest: “Places evoke powerful human emotions because they become layered, like a sediment or a palimpsest, with histories, stories, and memories”; she anchors place, “inhabited in the fullest sense” to becoming “embodied with ...stories, myths, and legends” (*Geographies 2*). In addition, James Cahalan in “Homeplace Literatures: Pedagogies of Place” acknowledges the connections students make with the inclusion of their own place-based knowledge. He found that students are not as likely to resist emotionally because they can relate to the written material in their own regions based on their own knowledge of a particular area. As a result, Cahalan calls for a “new way of reading and organizing literature and...for a hometown pedagogy that draws students powerfully into what they learn and how they learn it”— literacy informed by regionalism, bioregionalism, ecocriticism, and place studies (249-253).

Sustainability

Students can access their prior knowledge and experience of the local community not only through geographic themes and elements but also through the notion of sustainability. Sustainability maintains that in order to have a balanced understanding of a community, the broad picture of the economic

conditions, social aspects, and environmental issues particular to that community must be considered interactively and systematically (Maida 1-3). Sustainability balances the needs of the present with a future generation's ability to care for its own needs or, as Derek Owens puts it, "achieving intergenerational and intragenerational equity: living in ways that do not jeopardize future generations" ("Curriculum" 119).

Sustainability not only focuses on the practices of local communities because each has unique needs and concerns and identities, but it also includes a regional cultural perspective that is based on experience and identity—all of which give a unique "way of knowing" (Maida 3). Like Bourdieu's *habitus* in particular times and places, our habits, customs, traditions, and perceptions influence our lives. Clifford Geertz describes this knowing as "local knowledge," a form of "fugitive truth," which is available through "crafts of place" which range from politics to poetry (qtd. in Maida 3). Local and regional knowledge and crafts of place are not normally the topic of essays in first-year composition; however, as *[re]storying the commons* in composition, they could be.

Identity

An additional application of geography-based knowledge is through the concept of identity. Reynolds suggests a gap in our field. Although the field of composition is quick to acknowledge important identity markers such as race, gender, and class, the essential markers of a geographic nature have been "ignored or taken for granted[G]eographic locations influence our habits, speech patterns, style, and values" (Reynolds *Geographies* 11). Place-based

identity is particularly applicable to storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy research. Indeed, Smith and Watson suggest that “the world that is the ground of the narrator’s lived experience ... is in part composed of cultural myths, dreams, fantasies, and subjective memories” and these myths and memories are essential to the life writing experience (12).

Most importantly, place and identity ground a sense of belonging, the “history, dialect, informal rules about what it means to be an insider” (Clark 26). Insider knowledge implies an expertise and an acceptance which I will explore further in the literacy section. In addition, place engenders a sense of pride, not only in geographic aspects but also in the family and the work represented. Clark mentions the Appalachian pride in farming, coal mining, and railroading (27). In Western Pennsylvania, regional and local pride is evident in the ethnic heritage of its people and the historical influence from the rivers routing pioneers to the west to the Lincoln Highway Experience, the first ocean-to-ocean road crossing America. Area pride continues in the unique Pittsburgh-area vernacular; the eighteenth-century forts and battlefields; the twentieth-century houses of Frank Lloyd Wright—Fallingwater and Kentucky Knob; the Pittsburgh toilet (a toilet in the basement of a house so men could come directly from the mills and the mines into the basement of their homes to use toilet and shower facilities); and the entrepreneurial heritage of problem solving and creating and marketing products through a community’s farmers’ markets, in addition to the pride of being part of the local industries of mining, steel making, glass blowing, and farming, to name a few. Local identity extends to encompass the regional

“Steeler Nation” territory. I’ve lived in Texas and in New England, and in each place the story is similar—the local and regional identity in culture, food, folkways, and heritage is showcased by the stories passed on and retold about the area, and its events, heritage, and people—all of which are potential writing topics for first-year learners.

Literacy

Learners, especially in the first year of college, need the opportunity to write about the world they know in ways to meet course objectives. When learners bring their heritages—family, community, regional, world—to the college table, they bring their place-based knowledge as *insiders* and as learners of research and of writing to deepen their expertise not only in composition but also in cross-disciplinary interests. In this next section, I build on Paulo Freire’s literacy connection to writing, James Paul Gee’s sense of Discourse, Lisa D. Delpit’s response to Gee, and Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia to better establish links from our students’ background knowledge to an expanded awareness of literacies in the first year of transition into higher education.

In his literacy work, Paulo Freire links learning to read text to reading the context of the world and notes the interconnection between oral language and contextual reality. He analyzes his childhood world and describes his awareness of the nature of that world when he states, “The *texts, words, letters* of that context were incarnated in the song of birds—tanager, flycatcher, thrush—in the dance of the boughs blown by the strong winds announcing storms; in the thunder and lightning. . .” (Freire and Macedo 30). His “context” includes not only

the wildlife, winds, flowers, fragrances, color, and movement of the world around him but also the family cats and chickens, the “language universe of my elders, expressing their beliefs, tastes, fears, and values,” and his fear of ghosts (Freire and Macedo 31). His concept of literacy is grounded in a continual cyclical relationship between an individual person *reading* the world surrounding him or her and the linguistic elements of speaking and of writing and reading text:

... even the spoken word flows from our reading of the world. In a way, however, we can go further and say that reading the word is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of *writing it* or *rewriting it*, that is, of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work. For me, this dynamic movement is central to the literacy process. (Freire and Macedo 35-36, emphasis in original)

That practical link between observing the world around him and comprehending the literate world of reading and writing does not cease to function but is a continual cycle. Just as he applies this to learning to read, I suggest that when learners write about the world they know, they access a familiar world of knowledge of people, places, traditions, customs, food, games, and much more, thus moving from their *world* to the *word* of writing.

Literacy is also influenced by social practices. Gee suggests that literacy is based on social practices—the appropriateness and timing of “*saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations*”—so that one understands not only “what to say (write)” but also how to do it given the circumstances and the people

involved (“Literacy” 526). Using a capital D, he calls these practices “Discourses,” and likens them to an “identity kit ...[with] costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize,” such as the role of a doctor, a professor, a student of a particular field, a worker in any business (“Literacy” 526). A “*primary Discourse*” is one usually learned in a home environment while “secondary Discourses” are plural, “acquired” through interaction with others familiar with that discourse, and exclusive in that these “Discourses” include membership as an insider which “brings with it the (potential) acquisition of social ‘goods’ (money, prestige, status, etc.)” (Literacy” 527-528).

The language used in getting a college education can be perceived as a secondary Discourse with the implied promise that participants can hope for higher paying jobs. Bourdieu calls this exchange “cultural capital”—the knowledge and literacies a culture values in order to eventually use them in an exchange for one’s economic wellbeing (Thompson 14). However, not all incoming students are insiders, especially in an open-admissions institution. They are learning to read the system, to cope with massive paperwork and technology, to manage time and class commitments and transportation and jobs and, for some, their children. To become an academic insider takes time—time to taste and talk the language, time to trust, time to travel beyond the seeming dichotomy of home/academic literacies without threat to identity.

Gee assigns considerable importance to his definition of literacy, “*mastery of or fluent control over a secondary discourse,*” because indications of non-

fluency mark a participant as a “*non-member*” or even as a “*pretender* ... an *outsider* with pretensions to being an *insider*” (“Literacy” 529). Although one can be literate in one’s primary discourse, a sense of rejection threatens from the thought of being a *pretender*, of being an *outsider*, and includes language and the ability to use it in addition to various ways of behavior, speaking, even of dressing. Nancy M. Grimm adds that students whose families do not have an *insider* background can “blame themselves for not having what it takes to succeed, or to readily reject school culture, defining themselves in opposition to it” (*Good* 28). Schaafsma asks what of the students who feel “bored, powerless, disenfranchised ... [and] angry” as he calls for a reconsideration of “the value of story-telling and story-writing in the learning process” (“Research” 90).

However, Delpit in “The Politics of Teaching Literate Discourse” is troubled by Gee’s notion of the near impossibility of those outside the dominant discourse moving into dominant discourses which she likens to a “dangerous kind of determinism”; in addition, she is disturbed with his sense of the conflict of an individual’s values, especially for “women and minorities,” with the acquisition of a dominant discourse (546-547). She references story after story to illustrate those of the black community who have worked hard to “make it” in culturally alien environments” through acquisition of a dominant discourse, usually taught by a dedicated teacher (546-550). She acknowledges that for some students there can be terrible choices between allegiances which can affect a willingness to learn but adds that students need not be limited by their allegiances and can operate with the concept of having “repertoires” of voices (“The Politics” 551-553;

553). Academic discourse and language can have isolating effects. Richard Rodriguez in "Going Home Again" relates his experience as the son of Mexican-American parents in quest of his Ph.D. in English Renaissance literature: "... visits home became suffused with silent embarrassment: there seemed so little to share, however strong the ties of our affection" (408). He kept his feelings of success hidden but when he began to air the story of his "cultural dislocation," he found many others with similar feelings from a broad spectrum of backgrounds ("Going" 409). In her study of the narratives of leading composition academics reflecting upon their experiences upon entering the field of composition, Resa C. Bizzaro observes their sense of isolation was similar to her own feelings of disjuncture between family and the academic world and between the educational "gaps" in her background which she felt separated her from her colleagues ("Making" 498). Not all students experience a sense of loss or of isolation.

Katherine Sohn challenges the broad acceptance of loss related by academics such as Rodriguez. She notes in her study of eight West Virginia women who were acquiring college literacy that the women did not suffer loss of identity and that literacy did not separate the women from their communities (Sohn, "Whistlin'" 439, 441). However, the women in Sohn's study were older—one woman had elementary school children, three women had junior or senior high school children, and four had grown children and grandchildren. The average number of years between high school and college was sixteen years; these women had time to establish lives and identities separate from their identities as teenage high school students. They also lived in an area of the

country where neighborliness is a cultural value, and they were already established in their communities as adults with jobs and with children (Sohn, *Whistlin'* 85). The perception of the threat of and motivation for academic literacy of an eighteen year-old cannot be compared equally to perceptions of and motivations for academic literacy of women twenty years older who are already established in a community with children and jobs.

Although Delpit and Sohn bring a balance to the conversation, first-year learners are under pressure to perform with writing skills while in the process of becoming insiders. David Bartholomae notes incoming students have to adapt to our discipline's culture and "speak and write and practice the patterns that define the discourse of our community," and they have to do so with an authoritative voice "with power and wisdom ... before they know what they are doing" ("Inventing" 644). Incoming students are in the process of learning what is expected of them. They learn to enact Gee's secondary discourse while coping with Bourdieu's notion of the power of cultural behaviors and influences; in addition, they must translate language into academic discourse in a form of text unfamiliar to most Americans—an essay. Lee Honeycutt notes the difficulty of incorporating different voices "into a solid tone of a confident writer" and references Mikhail Bakhtin:

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of

appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language . . . but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated -- overpopulated with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (Bakhtin qtd. in Honeycutt)

Assimilating language, making it one's own in an academic setting, is challenging.

Charles Schuster's notion of literacy as more than reading and writing is based on a Bakhtinian perspective: "[L]iteracy is the power to be able to make oneself heard and felt, to signify" (43). Schuster adds that for Bakhtin and V. N. Volosinov language is the empowering agent that affects and organizes experience such that people can be literate in one culture, having the ability to "speak and be heard and often the power to write and be read," and yet be illiterate in another culture (44). With that definition, our students are literate in their own cultures but may experience the difficulty of illiteracy in their encounters with the otherness of an academic culture. As literacy educators, we can move away from a mindset that promotes the illusion of either an academic-based literacy or a home-based literacy and move toward giving our students a sense of power through Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia.

[Heteroglossia is the] basic condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physical—that will insure a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different that it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. (428)

If we focus on the context, our students represent many voices and contexts. Becoming many-voiced is similar to Delpit's sense of repertoire and to Kent's understanding of post-process theory, mentioned earlier. Our students need that versatility. Kenneth Bruffee, in an interview in 2008 with Michelle Eudoice, voices his concern for "linguistically and culturally" underprepared students and for the "many fields of endeavor" which are "handicapped by the inability of 80% of American college graduates to write effectively at a college level" (Eudoice 40). Learners from working class families or from another culture may especially have difficulties with writing. Working class families are already "skeptical" of the worth of a college education, and English courses in particular are a "hard sell" (Gorelsky "Ghosts" 305). Carolyn Dews, co-editor of *This Fine Place*, comments on the cost to working class academics transitioning from home-based literacies to academic-based literacies: the "academy has always erased our stories . . .

[and] has destroyed something even while it has been re-creating me in its own image” (Dews qtd. in Sohn 441).

In addition, twenty-first century learners from a different culture may have difficulty identifying themselves as part of the academic community (Jay and Jones 94). Gerald Campano notes his purpose as an educator is “to enable contemporary students from immigrant, migrant, and refugee families to become more effective agents in their own educational development by drawing upon their life experiences, values, and literate practices” (14). Students’ histories and stories are worthy of academic research as Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Roman suggest in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*. They state, “researching family archives and local stories can and does lead to sustained scholarly research and contributes to new knowledge, both in and outside of academe” (3).

Immigrant stories abound in families, localities, and regions. Years ago people hid their roots in an effort to assimilate into a society influenced by the Victorian age. For instance, my father continued his own family’s silence and feelings of shame about his Portuguese grandfather. He hid that knowledge from my mother for thirty years because the Portuguese had reputations as murderers and thieves and were ostracized in New England at the turn of the 20th century. Today, people are searching for truth, family, history, and stories as is evidenced by the phenomenal growth of ancestors.com and genealogical research. As literacy educators, we can extend to our learners the opportunity to write about familiar topics and places while giving them a safe place to develop their voices

with *insider knowledge* and to grow into their roles as literacy learners and narrative researchers in an academic setting.

J. Frank Dobie

J. Frank Dobie represents much of what I have discussed so far: a preservation of a culture's heritage, a respect for the ordinary person, a sense of a geographic region from an ecological perspective, a cross-disciplinary interest, and a passionate vision for folkways, story-telling, and writing. Espousing ecological issues and cultural connections in the 1920s, Dobie was a man ahead of his times. He grounded his writing in the ordinary features of life in a particular region—the land, people, animals, and cultures of the southwest—and is “recognized . . . as a major, once-in-a-century representative of the ‘cow country’ cultural experience” (Stone “Brush” 79). He crossed academic disciplines—although he taught literature, he was a respected historian. For instance, Dobie replaced Henry Steele Commager teaching American history at Cambridge University during World War II and wrote about the experience in *A Texan in England*. Paul C. Stone researched Dobie for his dissertation, *J. Frank Dobie and the American Folklore Movement: A Reappraisal*, and has written extensively on him. Stone comments that Dobie's importance lies in the all-inclusive nature of his work which includes the following:

...major themes in Western history, whether land use, regional literature, cultural pluralism, gender issues, or education and urbanization... He is always there and always part of the discussion, both of the history of this country and the question of

what kinds of transformational experiences go into making an American. (“Brush” 79-81)

Dobie has a national academic reputation especially at Yale which houses a leading center for the study of the southwest (Stone, “Brush”79).

Dobie was born in 1888 in Texas where he grew up on the family ranch, went to college, worked as a reporter and as a teacher and, after receiving his master’s degree in literature from Columbia, taught at the University of Texas. In Texas at the time, he was acquainted with some folklorists who would later influence the field greatly. In 1917, he joined the Texas Folklore Society (TFS), founded in 1909 by Leonidas W. Payne and John Lomax, a collector of western songs who later was well known for collecting folk songs and who became president of the American Folklore Society. Dobie succeeded Stith Thompson (author of *Motif-index for Folk Literature* and cofounder of the Folklore Program at Indiana University Bloomington) as secretary to the TFS, created the position of secretary-editor, and immediately began a publication program. He held that position for twenty-one years (“Dobie”).

Stone suggests that from 1906-1919 Dobie’s “literary ideals were sentimental, dreamy, and almost entirely unrealized,” but from 1920-1921 he changed—becoming stirred by the “great themes of orality” which “led to his immersion in Texas folklore as a form of orality” and consequently into text and into the purpose of his life (“Orality” 47). Dobie began writing his first book, *The Vaqueros of Texas*, and considered his purpose in life was “to show the people

of Texas and the Southwest the richness of their culture and their traditions, particularly in their legends” (“Dobie”).

He respected life, wishing to “dignify with significance” ordinary things (Dobie 16). His books often consisted of a series of short anecdotes, stories, or recollections centered on a particular topic common to the area such as *The Longhorns*; *Rattlesnakes*; and *The Mustangs*. He collected treasure stories into volumes, and his *Coronado’s Children* is a scholarly work, both “folkloric” and “historical” (Stone, “Orality” 48). He was outraged with textbook material and publishers, especially the discrepancy between course materials and student backgrounds:

Any people have a right to their own cultural inheritance, though sheeplike makers of textbooks and sheeplike pedagogues of American literature have until recently, either willfully or ignorantly, denied that right to the Southwest . . . I rebelled years ago at having the tradition, the spirit, the meaning of the soil to which I belong utterly disregarded by interpreters of literature and at the same time having the Increase Mather kind of stuff taught as if it were important to our part of America. (*Guide* 11)

As a result, he developed the course, “Life and Literature of the Southwest,” at the University of Texas where it is still taught today. In addition, he created its textbook, *Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest, with a few Observations*, in which he presents writings organized according to a subject or type: Indian Culture (broken down by various locations); Spanish, Mexican, and French

influences; early Texians; Texas Rangers; women pioneers; circuit riders; lawyers; doctors; politicians; judges; mountain men; transportation—the trails and the vehicles; the animals; mining and oil; nature; buffaloes and bears; wild flowers; folk songs; folk tales; poetry; drama; and other topics (11; 2). These topics could be generalized to represent any community—the ethnic mix of cultures, its early peoples and the ways they worked, the local flora and fauna, the industries and industry of its peoples, the community's stories and songs, its customs, and its challenges. Dobie looked for material “strong on the character and ways of life of the early settlers, on the growth of the soil, and on everything pertaining to the range” (9).

Although he had a range-sized vision of the region, he attended to the commonplace, to things of local significance. He commented that people look at a prickly pear and see nothing or “find it full of significances. For instance, the mere sight of a prickly pear may call up a chain of incidents, facts, associations” such as the following: Cabeza de Vaca's observations of the Gulf Coast Indians' method for getting liquid from the prickly pear in the 1600s; the way ranchers singed it to remove its thorns so it could be used to feed livestock during droughts; the fact that the plant hosts an insect from which the Aztecs made their famous dyes; the way it's used as a poultice for healing; the story of Texas Rangers turning back because the rattlesnakes were so huge in a prickly pear patch (15-16). Through the use of story and anecdote, Dobie connects four hundred years of survival in a region to a common plant. He adds, “A mind that can thus look out on the common phenomena of life is rich, and all of the years of

the person whose mind is thus stored will be more interesting and full” (16).

That’s not a bad legacy to pass along to first-year learners.

Dobie’s opinions echo through eighty years and enter the conversation on regionalism, sustainability, heritage of the land and people, and writing. For instance, he gives scope to the sense of the *region*:

I have never tried to define regionalism. Its blanket has been put over a great deal of worthless writing. Robert Frost has approached a satisfying conception. ‘The land is always in my bones,’ he said—the land of rock fences. But, ‘I am not a regionalist. I am a realmist. I write about realms of democracy and realms of the spirit.’ Those realms include The Woodpile, The Grindstone, Blueberries, Birches, and many other features of the land North of Boston. (8)

Dobie’s views on writing could apply to Expressivism today. He felt as art needed vitality to attract viewers so, too, it is “essential” for writing to be read (12). On readability he remarks, the “priests of literary conformity,” professors and critics—“have taken it out of many a human being who in his attempts to say something decided to be correct at the expense of being himself—being natural, being alive.” He adds they never had “a chance at the homemade chronicles of the Southwest” (12). The Expressivists could not have said it better.

Dobie’s notion of the generational nourishment from the land as his home and of that which we consider *sustainability* is lyrical and worth repeating in full:

Here I am living on a soil that my people have been living and working and dying on for more than a hundred years—the soil, as

it happens, of Texas. My roots go down into this soil as deep as mesquite roots go. This soil has nourished me as the banks of the lovely Guadalupe River nourish cypress trees, as the Brazos bottoms nourish the wild peach, as the gentle slopes of East Texas nourish the sweet-smelling pines, as the barren, rocky ridges along the Pecos nourish the daggered lechguilla. I am at home here, and I want not only to know about my home land, I want to live intelligently on it. I want certain data that will enable me to accommodate myself to it. Knowledge helps sympathy to achieve harmony. I am made more resolute by Arthur Hugh Clough's picture of the dripping sailor on the reeling mast, 'One stormy night when, wild northwesterners rave,' but the winds that had bit into me have been dry Texas northerners and fantastic yarns about them, along with a cowboy's story of a herd of Longhorns drifting to death in front of one of them, come home to me and illuminate those northerners like forked lightning plying along the top of black clouds in the night. (10-11)

Reading his words, I am again in Texas, not the Texas of the longhorns, but the Texas of my own experience where northerners (sudden, violent storms) strike and the temperature drops forty degrees in an hour, and the winds rustle Canadian air. Someone familiar with the place names—the Guadalupe River, the Brazos bottoms, and the East Texas piney woods is privy to *insider* sense, memories, and meanings. Students should have the opportunity to write of their home land,

to incorporate the lyrical in the light and pursuit of research, and to share their *insider* knowledge.

Summary

The field of composition studies is gradually recognizing the application of narrative professionally as a rich storehouse of data, as a means of identity, and as an account of being. Stories are essential to making meaning, for it is a “central premise that we need to exchange stories with each other in order to make sense of our worlds” (Pagnucci, *Living* 3). Family archives and local and regional stories are worthy of sustained academic research. The application of narrative reflects cross-disciplinary interests, core subjects, and interdisciplinary themes, all values “essential to student success” as stated in *Framework for 21st Century Learning*. To further student success, grounding narratives in place-based knowledge and relationships among people, place, and the environment not only situates learning to write academically with the students’ own *insider* knowledge, it may also create more interesting topics for research and writing, lessen the possibility of plagiarism, and affect student retention.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Composition instructors often refer to the process of writing as “messy”—not neat or linear. That term can also be applied to this research methodology. I began following a clear method as described below. However, along the way, I found myself in a different place, influenced by the research, as the following narrative reveals.

Rhetorical Design

There are a variety of ways to approach research in composition studies (Purves *viii*). In their text, *Composition Research/Empirical Designs*, Janice M. Lauer and J. William Asher review a variety of research designs—“historical, linguistic, philosophical, and rhetorical” (3). The latter is not as well understood as other modes of research and includes the following: *A motivating dissatisfaction* which generates *questions* which lead to *heuristics*, “which in composition studies has often occurred by probing other fields,” which in turn generates a *new theory* and *arguing for its justification* (3-5). These categories more nearly reflect the work of my research.

Motivating Dissatisfaction

A variety of factors motivate educators to seek change. A concern for students is one factor in composition studies—students who are alienated, who produce boring responses to assignments, and who resent a course that has little to do their majors or with their backgrounds (Gere “Kitchens” 1093; Gorelsky 305; Johnson and Moneysmith *ix*). As a composition educator, I am deeply

disturbed that students are not encouraged to access the insider knowledge of their lives and their communities in fulfilling the requirements for first-year composition courses. The false binary of either information appropriate to an academic background and identity or appropriate to home backgrounds and identities outraged me as a non-traditional student and as an educator. Like Clark in her study of Appalachian women returning to school cited in chapter two, I also believe that local literacies can serve as a “bridge, instead of a pitfall, to academic literacy” (175). The disconnect between a learner’s insider and place-based knowledge and the academy’s approval of what constitutes a topic suitable for academic research motivated me to investigate the application of my own interests as categories for academic research in this dissertation.

Questions

Questions need not be complicated. As mentioned in chapter two, Deborah Mutnick looked at the changing demographic history of her child’s school neighborhood and asked “Why?” Lisa Delpit questioned issues of power among diverse educators, and Gerald Campano, noting that educational reforms often “do not build on the rich experience and legacies students bring to school,” asked what was lost and gained in his own family’s immigrant experience (1-2). My research questions developed from my personal experience as a student and as an educator.

- How can life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy be applied to scholarly work in a college composition classroom?

- Are there instances or situations where life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy should not be applied to a college composition classroom?

My interest in practical aspects of life writing drew my attention to narrative research, and Gian Pagnucci's call to educators interested in narrative studies to "come in from the margins and make their voices heard" influenced my study of narrative in composition studies (*Living* 1). My research also builds on Miller and Jackson's concerns for the viability of the future for English Studies and their call for research and teaching programs focusing on regional cultures and local literacies. Some of their concerns include the distance between literary studies and their appeal to working class students, the rate of retention of students from underrepresented backgrounds, and the need to connect "the work of the discipline to the broader spheres of experience that students bring" (702). Additionally, my research also acts as a gathering place for the disparate strands of knowledge that could be useful to students for research and for writing assignment topics and possible themes.

Heuristics

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *heuristic* as "the process or method for problem solving, decision-making, or discovery" (def. 2). The term implies the sense of a process that is a shortcut which may or may not solve a problem. As noted above, when searching for answers Lauer and Asher state that questions in composition often have answers found in other fields. Although ecocomposition is now part of composition studies, I went to geography to

establish connections between people, places, and the environment and the three categories of my research. In addition, storytelling and folklore are often outside the field of composition and, depending on departmental structure within a university, may be considered outside the confines of English Studies.

Composition assignments often include an essay tracing one's literacy heritage; however, the term encompasses so much more than a historical literacy log that I included it in my research as a category appropriate for academic research within a learner's life experience.

New Theory

According to Lauer and Asher, the "creation of a new theory shares the features of any creative act—an interaction between context, heuristics, intuition, and the constraints of the person and the field" (5). This resonated with me. However, there were problems.

Creating essay assignment topics in the first year composition class that tap into, in academic ways, a learner's insider knowledge constitutes my context. Moving outside the confines of composition studies, I incorporated the fields of storytelling and folklore, and I also applied geography as a frame for learners to explore their rich personal knowledge of the people, places, and environment within their experience. Nedra Reynolds has written about geography and composition connections as a cultural geographer, and Sidney I. Dobrin and Christian R. Weissner, among others, have also written on ecocomposition. However, I appeal to the broad knowledge of geography that most incoming students have because it is a required high school subject. I base my research

on my intuition and experience as a composition educator, a storyteller, and a life-writing consultant. Concerning “the constraints of the person and the field,” as noted in earlier chapters, the discipline of English Studies is rife with strife, and educators may resist narrative opportunities within the field of composition studies. Although I promote this vast choice of topics located within a learner’s experience, and although our professional organizations such as the Conference of College Composition and Communication and the Modern Language Association recognize narrative writing, the academy may not value narrative ways of knowing (Schaafsma in Pagnucci, *Living* 17). Despite these constraints, I posit that learners can access their personal knowledge in academic ways through the concept of *[re]storying the commons*.

Reality Check

However, as I wrote the dissertation, I realized that I was not creating a theory. I was moving forward in the tradition of compositionists searching for new ways to engage students and to create meaning, as I mentioned in chapter two. Research methods are changing and doctoral programs have been under scrutiny. In 2010, Sidonie Smith, president of the Modern Language Association, suggests “reimagining the dissertation” (“Beyond”); in 2012, nontraditional formats were considered, such as digital projects, creative nonfiction, a suite of essays, a portfolio, a translation of a work, or a collaborative work; and in May 2014, the *Report of the MLA Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Literature* was released and advocated broadening the program to include preparation for non-academic jobs, cutting the doctoral program to five years to cut student costs,

and encouraging “new forms of scholarship and ...new modes of preparation” (Jaschik; Flaherty). The MLA discussion is pertinent to doctrinal programs in composition studies.

I began my research with a traditional format, and the Lauer and Asher rhetorical design gave a frame to establish my thinking, but I came to realize I was not writing a theoretical dissertation. My research gathers information from different disciplines and synthesizes and integrates that information to create new knowledge in composition studies as *[re]storying the commons*. The analysis of my own published and unpublished work reveals the pervasiveness of the influence of story, folklore, and heritage literacies. In addition, as I progressed in the research and writing of this material, I came to a better understanding of myself as a writer and of research written narratively. Reflection became instrumental to my insight. In writing this dissertation, I found myself snared in the middle of change—hoisted on my own narrative petard so to speak. The more I researched narrative, the more I realized that I was learning to write in a totally different manner. As a result, the methodology of this research was guided by the Laurer and Asher rhetorical design which morphed into research as a synthesis and then into revelation of a writer’s narrative journey.

My dissertation is research intensive and centers on material available through print and Internet resources. As such, books, scholarly articles, conference programs, calls-for-proposals, emails, databases, and web sites are examined for material relating to *[re]storying the commons*. Conference programs include the premier conferences for English studies—the Conference

on College Composition and Communication, the Modern Language Association conference, the National Council for Teachers of English. In addition, I draw upon my own experience as an educator, storyteller, consultant, and writer.

CHAPTER FOUR

STORYTELLING, FOLKLORE, AND HERITAGE LITERACY

In this chapter, I review background information necessary to the discussion of my research questions in the next chapter:

- How can life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy be applied to scholarly work in a college composition classroom?
- Are there instances or situations where life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy should not be applied to a college composition classroom?

I organized the material in this chapter with storytelling first because it is often considered a subset of folklore. However, storytelling in the twenty-first century is much more than a folktale told orally; storytelling, or narrative, is a major way of managing knowledge across disciplines, institutions, and other groups. It has the possibility of developing into a field of its own.

Both storytelling and folklore encompass enormous territory, so I limit my discussion to a brief history of each, a review of some of the academic coursework and publications, and a summary of other applications. Heritage literacy is a more recent concept and is interconnected to story and folk knowledge. The purpose of this chapter is to establish just what is meant by each of the three terms.

The development of these topics may seem disconnected to composition studies—for instance, what do the worlds of medicine and business have to do with first-year composition? However, it is likely that many students from various

disciplines, even English, will be employed in the fields of healthcare, science, education, business, and technology—all of which have scholarly connections to storytelling, in particular, and also to folklore and heritage literacies.

Storytelling

When asked what comes to mind at the word “storytelling,” I find that people commonly laugh and associate it with “lying,” a fib, or relate it to something for children or to a children’s story time at a library where a librarian may orally tell or read a story from a book. However, storytelling is a major force across life in America today. Traditionally, the stories—the genealogies, the memorable occasions, the values, the entertaining tales, and the collected wisdom of a family, community, region, and nation were passed orally. Today, storytelling continues as a major tool to organize knowledge and manage information across disciplines and corporations, as I will demonstrate below. I first became involved with storytelling through a circle of enthusiasts who met monthly in the Clear Lake area of Houston, Texas to tell tales. Some were professional tellers; some just enjoyed listening. Storytelling resounded with me, connecting my interests in history, drama, and writing and re-awakening my oral/aural ear.

Although scholars trace narrative roots through Aristotle to structuralism, the consideration of the oral aspect of narrative adds oral and performative roots. As discussed previously in the literature review, interest in narrative is flourishing across academic disciplines; story not only organizes knowledge, it presents facts in a clear and compelling manner with context (Duarte 40-41). In his

discussion of narrative with historians, literary theorists, and those who work in social sciences, Donald E. Polkinghorne explains, in *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*, that human experience, as “parts in a whole,” is rendered meaningful when related through narrative discourse (36).

Narrative is practical and applied through ethnographies; case studies; police reports; court appearances; any applications such as for adoptions, scholarships, employment, or welfare; advertising; fundraising; grant writing; team building; innovations; and video games. Indeed, narrative is a “key concern” in a variety of disciplines such as “[s]ociolinguistics, discourse analysis, communications studies, history, and philosophy ... cognitive and social psychology, ethnography, sociology, media studies, artificial intelligence, medicine, business, and jurisprudence” (Herman, McHale, and Phelan 1); narrative is also a concern in “education ... political thought and policy analysis, health research ... [and] theology”(Herman 4). Narrative and narrative structure bridge the ancient world and the global twenty-first century. The history of storytelling traces the oral nature of story from the ancients to the influence on the invention of writing and the printing press to television to modern media. A brief history follows to establish the shared backgrounds of narrative and oral story and to include the development of the storytelling movement in the 1970s.

Story was usually oral and served a variety of purposes in the past. It traced a people’s history and kept it alive, provided entertainment, passed news, and guarded a people’s identity and their cultural traditions (Baker and Greene 1). Folk narratives established a community’s identity in a language anyone could

understand, expressed needs and desires, reflected the social order and values as well as the possibility of changing them (Zipes, *Breaking* 6-7). Oral stories marked the rhythm of living and might incorporate “wondrous and marvelous elements” fostering for their adult audience identity, belonging, and a magical hope that action could produce “a better world” (Zipes, “Introduction” xii). Ancient stories developed into tales of heroes, legends, and myths.

Storytellers preserved the stories, histories, and traditions of their cultures. The tellers were highly respected in most cultures and came from a range of positions in society. A teller might be a person in power such as a priest or one without social standing—a peasant; all were respected. Folk tales were common in all countries, so the names for tellers varied. For example, in Germany tellers, known as “minnesingers,” sang story through music and poetry; in Ireland *ollans* were expert tellers while shanachies visited homes in their travels and told stories by the fireplace. In Africa, griots told stories and might travel like the Irish shanachies or be a part of a household retelling the leader’s exploits while wandering tellers collected and told oral narratives (Baker and Greene 1-3). Padraic Colum, an Irish teller and author, observes tellers reflected the passing of light and the rhythm of the day to night’s nuances: “The rhythm of the night, marked in the place where it was told, set the mood without which the traditional story would have diminished appeal” (ix). After the invention of writing, epics were recorded, for instance—*Gilgamesh*, *Beowulf*, *Kalevala*. Worthy of note is that although a story is important, the first mention of storytelling records the effect of the experience. In the Westcar Papyrus, written 2000 – 1300 B.C., it is

written that Cheops, the renowned builder of Egypt's pyramids, is entertained by tales told by his sons (Baker and Greene 2). The pleasure of story is one of its attractions.

The birth of the publishing industry began the gradual demise of oral storytelling as people became literate. Colum suggests the newspaper took the place of the "man of memories," and its common language replaced dialects, which affected the meaning of a story (*viii*). In England, writers and artists moved from the patronage system to reader subscription to publishers which combined with the English poets' resistance to the industrial revolution and to mass marketing. In Germany, Romantics resisted industrialization but, by the late 1800s, Johann Gottfried Herder chose to embrace "folk art and the vernacular" while "English poets were estranged from popular taste" (Leitch 12; Fishman and McCarthy 653).

Story was not limited by orality and included poetry, dance, music, and objects. It is not my purpose to go into the various forms of narrative; however, the movement and influence of narrative between oral story and illustrated object adds another layer to the depth of narrative in the past and influences visual story in the future. The knowledge of an oral story was portrayed in various ways visually through objects as well as song and dance. Masako Watanabe, senior research associate in the department of Asian art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, notes that narratives can be found on "screens, playing cards, scrolls, illustrated books" (*vi*). Japanese screens included detailed aspects of physical geography creating rich visual text of gnarled roots and rocks and architecture. The oral narrative was familiar to the people in the culture; by the 14th through

16th centuries, the narratives were performed with dance, song, and drama. As objects were decorated depicting the stories, the illustrated pieces were often not based on the original oral narrative but on the later performance version. The format of the object also dictated the focus of the narrative retelling of a tale. A study of the story, “The Great Woven Cap,” revealed that the imagery in hand scrolls retained many of the story’s narrative aspects with aspects of the story—“boat, diver, dragon spaced evenly” while on screen the boat was “enormous”; narrative was also influenced by who commissioned the work and for what occasion (Watanabe 3-18; 18). In one sense, a visual story can be similar to a computer icon—click on it and it reveals a plethora of information. Visual narratives, whether painted on a screen or stamped on a blue and white plate with a Blue Willow pattern, require only a glance to access a commonly known story. These storied objects are roots to visual storytelling today which will be discussed later.

As people from all cultures and countries immigrated to the United States during the nineteenth century, they brought their languages with them. Librarians focused on the oral practice of storytelling as a means to introduce children to books in an “artistic rather than a classroom manner” as well as to “socialize immigrant children” (Baker and Greene³; Sobol 5). In 1903, the National Story League was created by teachers at the University of Tennessee to keep “stories alive in libraries and schools” (J. Smith xv-xvi). Marie Shedlock, a gifted storyteller from England who told Hans Christian Anderson tales, was instrumental to the growth of storytelling in libraries. While other tellers reflected the affected

gestures and voice of elocution popular at the turn of the century, Shedlock displayed such a keen sense of story and voice that her virtuoso was likened to Paderewski's playing of the piano (Moore *vii*; Baker and Greene 4). Storytelling spread from New York to Pittsburgh where librarians took it to the playgrounds. By 1909, more than 80,000 children in Pittsburgh heard stories. Storytelling spread through Buffalo and Chicago, and children's departments and story hours became part of most libraries.

The twentieth century brought the new technologies of radio and television. The communal need for tales and interest in oral tales ceased for the most part, although storytelling was still practiced in pockets of cultures. During the 20th century, barriers to American higher education for all people shifted through the G.I. Bill for returning World War II veterans and through open-door policies influenced by the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. The folk singing of Peter, Paul, and Mary was heard throughout the land at civil rights meetings, and an interest in folk music spread along with a counter-cultural mindset. By the 1970s, the country had experienced the Vietnam War, Woodstock, and Watergate: "There was an instinctive sense that radical changes in community and self were tragically frail without disciplines of awareness and communication" (Sobol 9). As the ancient ballads were given voice by Joan Baez and others, an interest in storytelling was birthed in adults. At the same time, new visual recording technologies helped broaden interest in folklore with the revival of oral storytelling as a performance and healing art. Folklorists had collected oral narratives for more than a hundred years but were not highly regarded. The

growth of storytelling in the libraries, the folk movement, the countercultural attitude, the plodding persistence through the past practiced by folklorists collecting, and a growing awareness of the need to sustain a healthy environment combined to foster a storytelling revival (Sobol 1-11). The 1960s and 1970s were times of radical violent cultural disruption which showcased an immediate national need for change racially, politically, environmentally, socially. Storytelling was a way to reconnect.

In 1972, Jimmy Neil Smith, a journalism teacher in Tennessee, was listening to a teller on the radio when he had the idea of creating a place for a festival. A year later Jonesborough, Tennessee, an eighteenth century historic village near the Great Smokey's National Park, held the first storytelling festival. Since that time, Jonesborough has hosted the festival which has grown from a one-wagon-with-a-hay-bale scenario to an event with multiple locations in various parts of the village bringing thousands of visitors to the three-day event. The National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling was formed, and in 1994 became the National Storytelling Association. Jonesborough created the International Storytelling Center, a building dedicated to storytelling. In 1998, NSA divided into two organizations—the National Storytelling Network (NSN) and the International Storytelling Center (ISC). NSN is a professional organization with an annual national conference. It publishes *Storytelling Magazine*, promotes SIGs, and maintains a membership listserve (*National*). ISC is a Smithsonian Affiliate and partners with the American Folklife Center to create an archive, The International Storytelling collection, located at the Library of

Congress. The National Storytelling Festival celebrates its 42st year in 2014 and is touted as one the “Top 100 Events in North America” (“History.” *National*).

Storytelling as an oral art and performance art is practiced across the country. Guilds have formed regionally such as the Tejas Storytelling Association and the League of New England Storytellers (L.A.N.E.S.). In addition, regional and local storytelling festivals are held across the country and attract tourists and visitors. Once vulnerable to the printed page, oral storytelling is now experiencing a revival nationally and internationally. Students may come from a rich oral/aural storytelling heritage. Exploring that heritage, in academic ways, is possible as an area of research for first-year learners.

Today, storytelling is also practiced in our culture daily—but differently. Although it touches most aspects of life in powerful ways, it may not be recognized as narrative, as telling a story. Sylvia L. Lovely, in the Introduction to *Wake Me Up When The Data is Over: How Organizations Use Storytelling to Drive Results*, suggests this age is defined by the understanding that “dreams, emotions, intuition, creativity . . . are forces of far greater importance than previously realized; she adds that quantum theory, which “suggests the universe is about the elements affected and defined by their relationship with each other, marks a sea change in the scientific view of how the universe operates” (xxii). Storytelling connects ideas, facts, and data with meaning and emotion and is evident across the spectrum of life.

The interest in storytelling is academic and global. *Storytelling, Self, Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies* is an academic

journal previously published by Lawrence Erlbaum and published twice a year by Wayne State University Press. Courses and programs are offered at universities in Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, England, Germany, India, Norway, and Scotland (E.Miller). In the United States, storytelling may be offered at universities as a program of study; as part of a group of related courses such as in theater, oral communication, technology, education, or performance studies; or as a single course. Storytelling courses are housed in various departments which, based on Eric Miller's *A World-wide List of Courses In and/or About Storytelling Taught at Colleges and Universities*, include the following: Liberal Studies; Education; Communication Arts; Television, Radio, Film, Theatre; Information Studies; Information and Library Science; Performance Studies; Folklore; Theater Arts; Management; Psychology; English; and Communication, Writing , and the Arts

However, the breadth of storytelling courses can be difficult to find on the Internet, especially since storytelling has morphed from performance-oriented material to technology-centered presentations. I searched the Internet with *storytelling* and again with *digital storytelling*; the following is based on that search and my own knowledge (see Table 2).

Table 2

Partial List of Colleges and Universities with Storytelling Certificates and Degrees

University/College	Certificates	Degrees
East Tennessee State	UG Minor- Storytelling	M.A.- Reading/Storytelling
Indiana University	New Media and Interactive Storytelling	
University of Colorado- Denver	Digital Storytelling	
Ball State University		M.A. Telecommunications (Digital Storytelling)
Asbury University		M.A. Communications: Digital Storytelling
California State University-Los Angeles	Graduate Certificate	
University of North Texas	Graduate Storytelling Certificate	
Community College of Aurora		A.A.S. Graphic Storytelling
South Mountain Community College		Storytelling Institute

Of note, almost half the programs above are offered on a graduate level, and most involve technology. Additional courses are offered at the following institutions of higher education (see Table 3). This is not a complete list but rather exhibits the range of colleges and of storytelling applications.

Table 3

Examples of Storytelling Courses at Universities and Colleges

University	Courses Offered
Brown University	Storytelling in the Digital Age
Chapman University	Introduction to Visual Storytelling
Columbia University	Narrative Medicine: Strategic Communications
Harvard University	Multimedia Communication: Digital Storytelling
Kent State University	Business Narrative and Storytelling
Northwest Indian College	Digital Storytelling (with service learning)
Stanford University	The Power of Stories to Fuel Innovation
Texas A&M University	Advanced Animation: Visual Storytelling
Tufts University	Storytelling Time: Passing on Family Culture
University of Kansas	Storytelling: Narrative and the Oral Tradition
	Visual Storytelling

The courses range from traditional oral storytelling to business and family narratives to technically telling story. The courses and activities available at colleges and universities give voice to such varied interests as business narrative, law, rural development, digital workshops, voices for change, innovation, media communication, oral tradition, and passing on family values and other values.

Of particular interest to me is the rejoining of the arts separated by academic departments and now centered in storytelling. Marie Shedlock, storyteller extraordinaire, said that “one of the surest signs of a belief in the educational power of the story is its introduction into the curriculum of the

training-college and the classes of elementary and secondary schools” (“Introduction” *xvii*). Additionally, universities are further engaged in storytelling activities outside of coursework. For instance, Aurora College offers a Storyteller’s website for Alumni; Brown University Storytellers for Good unite various disciplines to promote social change; the University of Denver Sturm College of Law hosted the 3rd Biennial International Applied Storytelling Conference; the University of Maryland put “Photos, Visuals, and Visual Storytelling” on its Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center; Connecticut College hosts the Connecticut Storytelling Center, and Cankdeska Cikana Community College in Fort Totten, North Dakota has the Digital Storytelling for the National Library of Medicines “Native Voices” Travelling Exhibit. Not only do universities and colleges offer course and provide practical support, dissertation research also reveals storytelling interests. A search of the Proquest database confirmed the broad interest in storytelling across the disciplines (see Table 4).

Table 4

ProQuest Results for Storytelling as a Keyword Search Term as of October 2013

Search Term: Subject	Search Term:	All	Five	Two
Heading	Keyword	Dates	Years	Years
Storytelling	---	541	261	157
Science	Storytelling	284	140	86
Education	Storytelling	219	111	71
Digital	Storytelling	43	35	19
Religion	Storytelling	42	21	8
Technology	Storytelling	33	31	15
Leadership	Storytelling	31	21	14
Health	Storytelling	27	17	10
Management	Storytelling	26	13	7
Composition and Rhetoric	Storytelling	19	2	1
Games	Storytelling	10	6	4
Business	Storytelling	8	3	3
Geography	Storytelling	5	3	2
College English	Storytelling	1	1	0
College Composition	Storytelling	1	0	0

Source: Proquest Database. Web. October 2013.

I chose the subject headings based on the topics reflected in my search for recent publications with *storytelling* in Academic Search Complete. I entered the discipline as a Subject Term and *storytelling* as a Keyword in the ProQuest search. Education and Science surprised me with the most results— 284 and 219, respectively. However, of particular note is the rate of growth in most areas in the last two years.

Of interest is the lack of publication in the fields relating Storytelling to English Studies. This could be the result of a mindset that narrowly conceives the term, or it might be a matter of different wording. For instance, Lillie E. Smith Bailey's dissertation, *Tell It Like It Is: African American Students' Writing Narratives and Oral Stories*, used "oral stories" and "narratives" as keywords with the subject heading "Language Arts." As mentioned in Chapter Two, the search term "narrative" brings more response than the search term "storytelling"; however, I felt *storytelling* was the appropriate search term because it is the term used in other academic publications.

The numbers tell the story; there is phenomenal growth in most areas surveyed, but none in fields related to composition. In the following sub-sections, I look at storytelling in Business and Leadership, Health, Technology, and Education and consider how storytelling morphed from folktale to financial finesse. Again, the following is developed to demonstrate the practical application of storytelling as a topic of research for first-year learners.

Business and Leadership

In the *Elements of Persuasion*, authors Robert Dickman, who educates executives about storytelling, and Richard Maxwell state people in business do two things daily: "We sell our things—our product, our skills, our vision and our ideas—and we tell stories" (qtd. in Goldsmith). Where business is conducted or leadership manifested, stories are told. Stephen Denning, who discovered the power of storytelling when he was Director of Knowledge at the World Bank, suggests the impact of storytelling by comparing it to the gross national product.

He states that persuasion represents a bit more than 25 percent of the GNP and if “storytelling is –conservatively—at least half persuasion, then story amounts to 14 percent of GNP , or more than a trillion dollars” (*Leaders’* xvi). *Winning the Story Wars: Why Those Who Tell—and Live—the Best Stories Will Rule the Future* by Jonah Sachs and published by Harvard Business Review in 2012 may well portend the power of story.

Storytelling, like rhetorical persuasion, appeals to logical reasoning with persuasive arguments; it also touches emotions. Story places information in an easily comprehended context. It can appeal to an individual’s self-story, as in hero marketing described below. Like rhetorical argument, truth is part of storytelling—to what degree and from whose perspective may be flexible. For instance, products and ideas are marketed with precision to a target audience and with expert advertising and legal advice, but the adage “buyer beware,” places responsibility upon the consumer. However, integrity is an essential part of “authentic storytelling,” especially when the story reflects the values of a person, group, or institution (Driscoll and McKee 209). As one does not accept rhetorical statements without some references and sometimes further research, so, too, one should be educated about the power of story in all its various forms. First-year learners need that knowledge. Understanding the power of story and its multiple perspectives may lend additional immediacy and motivation for the first-year composition course.

Companies that have used storytelling include Microsoft, Presbyterian Healthcare Services, the Mayo Clinic, the World Bank, IBM, Coca-Cola, Nike,

Hollywood, Disney, Adobe, the Pentagon, NASA, and General Motors, to mention a few (Brady and Haley 41; Denning, *Springboard xxi*; Stephens). Companies may have many storytellers beyond the obvious marketing and legal department. For instance, IBM is known to use more than other corporations (Stephens).

Storytelling may not be labeled as such, making a numerical account of the practice difficult if not impossible. Different business terms are used interchangeably with storytelling. For instance, storytelling is known as the management of knowledge which is also known as “organizational learning, organizational memory, and expertise management” (Schwartz 47); production techniques are also known as “storytelling management” and “narrative branding” (Salmon *vii*). Definitions are only understood as storytelling with research.

Companies apply storytelling in different ways. Some common ways include marketing and branding, management, organizational change, leadership, teamwork, and identity, according to Table of Content entries in Lori L. Silverman’s *Wake Me Up When the Data Is Over: How Organizations Use Stories to Drive Results*. Marketing people have combined Abraham Maslow’s higher needs chart and elevated these needs to serve ideals or other people so that, rather than being identified as “helpless consumers,” people are identified as “emerging active citizens” (Sachs 149). Called “hero embodiment,” marketing personnel also tap into the story of heroism to influence brand loyalty. Loyalty to causes and brands is created through marketing a consistent message, developing archetypes portraying values consumers can identify with,

envisioning consumers as “heroes-in-the-making and the implicit stars of your stories,” and, finally, “by telling stories that deliver a pattern of meaning for a society in need of just that” (Sachs 166, 29). The concept, “empowerment marketing,” is similar; in *Storytelling: Bewitching the Modern Mind*, Christian Salmon connects with the consumer through the idea of values common to people—“higher level values appropriate to your message, brand, and audience” which marketing professionals combine with the concept of heroism “to appeal to the heroic potential in your audience” (113).

Transformational change is the goal as the consumer becomes a proactive citizen. Story archetypes are favored in the message to embody and bond values so that consumers relate to an altruistic hero concept— “not just to fulfill themselves, but to heal, renew, and improve the world at large” (Salmon 166). Carl Jung explored four archetypes concerning people, personality, and motivation (Archetypes). The business world developed the idea—the search terms “archetypes” and “marketing” netted more than 20,000 responses on Google Scholar. People relate to the values and identify with the story. The Indiana University of Pennsylvania’s “Get My Story” is an example of viewers/readers identifying with the values, experience, and story of an individual student.

Narrative also engages consumers in interactive ways. For instance, General Motors developed a regional storytelling website, “Drive the District,” to engage customers in communication with the company and to influence stakeholders (Stein). One consultant remarked, “People do not buy products;

they buy the stories the products represent” (Ramzy qtd. in Salmon 21).

Future employees are also affected by stories. They may need to polish their story, as an essential activity before an employment interview. In *Finding Work When There Are No Jobs*, Roger Wright suggests, “All the time spent sending resumes into cyberspace would be better spent honing and perfecting your story and finding the right people to tell it to” (qtd. in Klingensmith 10).

Katherine Hansen goes into greater detail as to how to structure stories and for what occasions in *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling to Get Jobs and Propel Your Career*. She suggests developing narratives that reflect one’s character, values, and identity by creating stories that portray the obstacles overcome, the people who have helped, and how they did so. (2-10).

Stories are versatile. They can clarify data. Nancy Duarte, CEO of Duarte Design whose clients include the world’s top fifty brands, commented that data by itself can be interpreted in different ways, but storytelling creates “context and meaning” (40-41). Data’s “mind-numbing cascades of numbers” do not inspire (Denning, *Leader’s* 5). “Facts, stats, charts” cause an audience to zone out and represent a “classic mistake” because the right brain hemisphere of “action, risk, decision” does not respond to “left brain stimuli (numbers, facts, history)” (West 3,16). For instance, Bob Feldman of PulsePoint Group attended the Arthur Page Society’s Future Leader program at the University of Texas-Austin with thirty-five other executives from the communication industry. One module of five addressed the need to move beyond “fact-based, key messages, third-party

credibility, news reporting/documentary-style video” and add storytelling content (Feldman and Zimpler).

In addition, story frames information. Bill Gates intentionally steps into the role of a master storyteller as he applies story to himself and to Microsoft. He uses story to describe problems Microsoft will tackle, to illustrate ideas, to refute disparaging stories about him or his company, to problem solve, to shape public perception of the company, to argue, and to reinterpret information and stories (Eubanks 39-44).

Museums incorporate narrative to frame a collection or to pass knowledge to patrons and to locate them in a meaningful way in a time period or situation. Oral storytelling, printed text, and digital storytelling combine with artifacts on display. Some museums employ storytelling artists to orally perform story such as the National Museum of Kenya who partners with Zamelu Arts and Culture Trust to perform oral folklore (Agan 77). MUVI, the Virtual Museum of Collective Memory of Lombardy, Italy collected artifacts and memories, converting them digitally to provide an interactive continuous portrayal of the town’s history (Giaccardi 29-35).

Leadership is another major area for storytelling opportunities and applies broadly across all dimensions of working and private lives. Denning has written numerous books on the subject and states that in order to effect “transformational change,” which may require the leader to stimulate people to behave in unwelcome ways, the leader must be able to influence others to choose to follow and that is done through “touching minds and hearts” with story

(5). Howard Gardner adds that story is a “weapon” essential to leadership to present a leader’s image, goals, and obstacles and requiring “embodiment” or living out the represented ideals. Margaret Thatcher was one who used her story of a grocer’s daughter to support her story and her policies (2). However, with the simple use of the word “weapon,” Gardner conjures up an image of the leader as a warrior and links the relationship to our understanding of narrative warriors and their need to apply weapons, adding subtly to the story sense.

To grasp the breadth of story, I searched for academic peer-reviewed journal articles with Full Text availability from January 2013 to October 2013 in Academic Search Complete, using the term *Storytelling* to gain a better understanding of what is currently being published in journals. The database listed only one article for “Business.” I then searched Business Source Premier with the term “storytelling” for full-text articles to get a more accurate picture in the business world. The following peer-reviewed business journals published an article on storytelling from January 2013 to October 2013. I have grouped them to better understand categories of interest. The number following a category is the number of articles published in the time period; if a number in parenthesis follows the title, that journal published two articles (see Table 5).

Table 5

Business Storytelling Articles Published Jan. – Oct. 2013

Discipline/Topic	Number of Articles	Journal
Business Tactics	3	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> <i>Strategic Direction</i> (2)
Communication	5	<i>Business Communication Quarterly</i> (2) <i>Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media</i> (2) <i>Journal of Communication</i>
Leadership	3	<i>Academy of Educational Leadership Journal</i> <i>Leadership Quarterly</i> <i>Industrial & Commercial Training</i>
Management	9	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i> <i>Journal of Management Inquiry</i> (2) <i>Nursing Management, Quality Progress</i> <i>Management International Review</i> <i>Journal of Organizational Change Management</i> <i>Healthcare Financial Management and Administration and Society</i>
Marketing	2	<i>Marketing Health Services</i> <i>Journal of Marketing</i>
Organization	5	<i>Organizational Research Methods</i> (2) <i>Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry</i> <i>Physician Executive</i> <i>Journal of Critical Organizational Inquiry</i>
Public Relations	4	<i>Public Relations Tactics</i> (4)

Science	4	<i>Science, Technology & Human Values</i> <i>International Regional Science Review (2)</i> <i>International Sociology</i>
Technology	1	<i>IEEE Software</i>
Other	4	<i>Journal of Material Culture</i> <i>Qualitative Sociology; Journal of Counseling & Development</i> <i>Bulletin of Latin American Research</i>

Source: Business Source Premier Database. Web. October 2013.

I list the journals only to show the broad range of academic publications in the business world addressing an aspect of storytelling. The categories were selected based on the journal's title or on the article title. Some articles could fit in two different categories. In that instance, I focused on the journal title. A total of forty articles were published in English with about 50% of them concentrating on Management, Organization, Leadership, and Business Tactics. I include some titles to show the variety of application: "Leadership Manipulation and Ethics in Storytelling"; "Ethnographic Stories for Market Learning"; "Strategy as Storytelling: A Phenomenological Collaboration"; "Leader as Storyteller"; "Shaping the Future Through Narrative: The Third Sector, Arts and Culture." Clearly storytelling is actively being discussed in the professional journals of the business world in a variety of ways.

Storytelling is a topic of interest in the business world as evidenced by the growing number of publications by professional journals and dissertations. Story lends context to information and passes knowledge. It engages consumers interactively. Story presents students with new possibilities to explore a chosen field in new and practical ways.

Healthcare

In the field of health services, there is a particular need to pass on information in a clear and meaningful manner. Patients describe illness through their culture's definition of all that entails. Does the culture value stoicism in the face of pain? How does one attach relative value to the question, "Does it hurt?" Beyond cultural and linguistic differences, there is the issue of power. The role of a physician carries authority. How does one speak to authority? Shared storytelling is important in a clinical practice to illustrate a sense of "shared power" so that physicians, staff, and patients understand the importance of listening perceptively to cultural nuances and give time and space for that to occur (Aull 286).

Most people experience some trauma at some point in their lives. Children are especially vulnerable members of our society. The development of "resilience" is a "crucial goal," according to Jan Silvinski and Lee Silvinski, authors of *Storytelling and Other Activities for Children in Therapy*; story helps children come to terms with the trauma and to move toward healing, because the identification with characters in a story helps children adapt, learn coping skills, and consider plans for a future (11). Fairy tales communicate a message that life is unavoidably difficult but the struggles are part of life. They offer a hope "that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious" (Bettelheim 8). Although that may seem altruistic in the face of devastation,

stories encourage—they create a visualized narrative of behavior in a world of harsh realities.

Healthcare professionals use story to assist people coping with changed circumstances. For instance, whether recovering from horrific injury, dealing with loss, managing depression or such, occupational therapists use story to heal and deal with trauma (Scaletti and Hocking 66). Story as a story book or life book helps older people remember their lives and keeps them in touch with their identity and able to care for themselves (Day and Wills). Narrative therapy is another aspect of dealing with trauma as explained in *Narrative Therapy in Practice: The Archeology of Hope*.

Medical professionals tell stories as do the patients. Well-known physicians who write include the poet, William Carlos Williams, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of Sherlock Holmes fame, and popular author Michael Crichton M.D. In *Yale Medicine*, physicians comment on the way the practice of medicine and writing seem to inform one another (Shufro). However, it is the story of pediatric critical care nurses that gave me pause. Judy Rashotte writes of the need for a space to listen and to share the stories that haunt—stories of the deaths of children in their care. She cites the need for these nurses to travel through “the labyrinth of their grief and to live with the mystery of life and death at the uncanny silence that accompanies the passing of a child” (34). The description of grief as a “labyrinth” and “the uncanny silence” after a child’s death brought me into that story and made me a participant observer. The nurses search for meaning and healing in story, knowing “they carry the essence of who we are as caring,

emotionally available, interconnected nurses who give of ourselves to others, to carry the burden of other's suffering"; they compare deaths to find the range within the "worst" and "best" deaths knowing that stories "do not allow us to be misled by the surface of things. They invite us to embrace struggle" (Rashotte 35-37). The Healing Story Alliance SIG is evidence of the broad application of healing and story as is the prevalence of small group therapies with twelve-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Story serves to pass on information, to create meaning in communication, and to help negotiate life's difficulties for the healthcare professionals and for their patients. Story acknowledges reality—life's hard places—and offers paths through it and a promise of toughness—"resilience" crucial to managing change for children and adults—and with it an invitation to "embrace struggle" to live, as the pediatric critical care nurses do, with grief past, grief present, and the certitude of future grief. Stories, ancient and modern, help show the way.

The following are the publication results in the field of Health from January 2013 to October 2013 using the search term *storytelling* and *health* in the Academic Search Complete database with the "full text" and "peer reviewed" qualifiers. Twenty-four journals published articles; their titles follow: *Health Promotion Practice; Journal of Nutrition Education & Behavior; Personal & Ubiquitous Computing; Nursing Management; Qualitative Research; Journal of Family Violence; International Journal of Diabetes in Developing Countries; Qualitative Health Research; Journal of Family Violence; Journal of Transcultural Nursing; Alternative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples; Qualitative*

Health Research; Journal of Communication; Nurse Research; Texas Public Health Journal; Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness & Medicine; Home Health Care Management & Practice; Qualitative Social Work; Quality & Quantity; American Journal of Community Psychology; Journal of Counseling & Development; Pediatric Nursing; Journal of Clinical Psychology; Journal of Systemic Therapies. Topics included psychology, children, disease, and research, among others. The following article titles are a sample: “Cross-Validation of Bimodal Health-Related Stress Assessment”; “Telling the Patient’s Story with Electronic Health Records”; “Exploring the Potential of Communication Infrastructure Theory Informing Efforts to Reduce Health Disparities”; “An Evaluation of a Culturally Tailored Presentation for Diabetes Education of Indigenous Communities of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.”

Storytelling would seem to be broadly applied in the healthcare field judging by the range of publications. It is vital to healthcare professionals and to patients. It passes information, gives a listening ear, helps people heal, and enables people to cope with trauma. Students planning on entering the medical field might do well to consider the various applications of story and storytelling.

Technology

In *What Technology Wants*, Kevin Kelly, notes the development of language at about the same time as the debut of the Clovis point, an efficient technology improving hunting for large animals 12,000 years ago. The intersection of innovation and language development has been much discussed

in the past. However, Kelly made connections to story: “First, storytelling lies at the heart of innovation—a fleeting insight by one tribesman can be conveyed to another—and, second, cultural or technological innovation shares traits with biological evolution: Good insights provide a platform for ever-more-advanced ones” (qtd. in Clough 10). It would seem today that the cycle of insight and innovation aided by storytelling is creating a new era. Salmon, author of *Storytelling: Bewitching the Modern Mind*, adds that “storytelling inspires the new technologies of power” (vii). In this section, I examine some of the ways technology works with storytelling.

There are many areas of interconnectedness between narrative and technology. From iPhones to MP3 players to Facebook and YouTube, people are connected to a range of technology that make “story omnipresent” (Gottschall 197). Digital technology and media allow a global interaction socially. We live in a technical world from our iPhones and apps to involvement with social media. Facebook relates information as story; texting keeps the story going, and blogs share stories. A new blog is begun at the rate of one a second and 37% of bloggers focus exclusively on sharing their life story, according to the “A Portrait of the Internet’s New Storytellers,” from the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project (Lernhart and Fox). Story is ubiquitous through technology.

Technology teaches. Technology is combined with storytelling when courses are designed to train personnel. For instance, the military uses video games to simulate situations which allow participants to mentally and physically rehearse responses in addition to using it as a means of recruitment. Various

leadership training courses also apply the techniques of storytelling (Salmon 1-3). Joe Lambert, director of the Center for Digital Storytelling, has worked with people from every state and from 26 other countries. He adds another dimension to teaching when he suggests that the visual technology engages people and stimulates them back “into language and the written word.” The “sticking power” of learning is based on the combination of information and emotion—or storytelling (Porter 14). The teaching applicability of narrative and technology is an open field for educators and entrepreneurs.

Video games in particular offer a narrative line. The game not only contains a narrative but people have the opportunity to interact with the storyline. Video games are a powerful tool to shape knowledge of cultural literacy, according to Jordan Shapiro, co-editor of *Occupy Psyche: Jungian and Archetypal Perspectives on a Movement* and author of *FREEPLAY: A Video Game Guide to Maximum Euphoric Bliss*. For example, Cook Inlet Tribal Council and E-Line Media partnered to produce *Upper One Games*, a company owned by indigenous people. It creates “world-class games and game-based learning infused with Alaska Native values and culture” (Shapiro).

Some games include an avatar controlled by the gamer and stereotyped as a particular kind of character. Plots may be simplistic but the Live Action Role Playing (LARP) opportunities for the gamer fascinates as characters are created with narrative histories, people enter into story as one who is part of the story (Gottschall 182). Part of the appeal of the interactive game is the immersion of the individual into the fantasy of a virtual world with the belief they “are an

integral part of an unfolding story and that their actions can significantly alter the direction or outcome of the story” (Riedl and Bulitko). Second Life, common on college campuses, is not a game as such but rather a virtual world where one creates a persona avatar and a world so that one can enter that world as a lived story (Carr and Pond 18-22).

Narrative sequencing is essential to playing the games. Narrative intelligence is evident in tasks associated with computers including “story understanding, story generation, and commonsense reasoning” (Riedl and Bulitko). In *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, James Paul Gee observes the social-based learning and literacy connections in the frustration and joy of learning to play video games and considers how academics can tap into the intense willingness to learn exhibited by gamers. He notes gamers are learning “a new *literacy*” as an aspect of visual literacy and “*multimodal texts*” which combines various means such as “images and words to include sounds, music, movement, bodily sensations, and smells” (*What* 2-10; 14. Emphasis in the original). All aspects of a production—the nature of the colors, the formatting and typography, the way an image appears—combine not only to tell the story but also to connect with the viewer emotionally (Losowsky 4). A frown, a tear, and a smile are viewers’ responses signaling their emotional engagement. Visual stimulation engages the senses. Video games are powerful means to teach ways of thinking. Games, Gee observes, required him to learn new ways of thinking (*What* 5). Shapiro adds that the games “function like mythology, folklore, and scripture. They shape our ways of thinking about the

world.” To liken video gaming to the power of heritage identity, beliefs, and faith reveals the extraordinary and subtle power of gaming.

As noted in the beginning of the Storytelling section, universities and colleges offer a variety of courses linking storytelling and a digital world. Stanford University, MIT, and Carnegie Mellon-West Coast offer a range of applications which will be discussed in the Education sub-section.

In the search of Academic Search Complete, the following journals addressed storytelling and technology: *Journal of Education Technology and Society*; *Qualitative Research*; *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research*; *Computers & Graphic*; *Journal of Material Culture*; *Computer*; *Computer Supported Cooperative Work: The Journal of Collaborative Computing*; *Internet Research*; *Leonardo*; *Technology & Culture*; *Technology & New Media*; *Computers in Human Behavior*; *Computers & Education*.. Other journals published articles pertaining to technology; however, these journals by their titles specialized in technology.

Technology combined with narrative worlds would seem to be the cusp of innovation. Like the development of the Clovis Point coinciding with aspects of language creating an explosion of innovative tools, narrative and technology create a space for further innovation in cycles of development.

Education

Storytelling in education is an extremely broad field. In this section, I discuss publications first and then the narrowed field. The search in Academic Search Complete, with *storytelling* and *education* from January 2013 to October

2013 using the qualifiers “Full Text” and “Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals,” showcases the number and variety of journals publishing in the field of education as well as the topics. There were eighty-eight responses for the ten month period with some article titles as follows: “Beyond the School’s Boundaries: PoliCultura, a Large-Scale Digital Storytelling Initiative” in *Journal of Educational Technology & Society* and “Re-Storying Practice: Using Stories About Students to Advance Mathematics Educational Reform” in *Teaching and Teacher Education*. Topics included storytelling with some aspect of the following: community, identity, pedagogy, language proficiency, science, teaching, group dynamics, personal narrative, jokes, empathy, reading, vocabulary, sign language, ethnology, video games, aging, folktale, history, language comprehension, narrative research, auto-ethnography, bilingual children, cross-racial storytelling, diversity, libraries, literature, professional identity, decisions, and poetry.

I also searched, using the same qualifiers, for *storytelling* and *College English* and *storytelling* and *college composition* with no results. However, the search terms *storytelling* and *college* brought 24 results with such titles as the following: “Virtual Justice: Testing Disposition Theory in the Context of a Story-Driven Video Game” in *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*; “Storytelling: An Informal Mechanism of Accountability for Voluntary Organizations” in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*; and “Projections: Comics and the History of Twenty-First-Century Storytelling” in *College Literature*.

Storytelling is evident on three professional websites having to do with English Studies: the Modern Language Association (MLA), the National Council

of Teachers of English, (NCTE), and the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA). On the MLA site, the 2014 MLA Convention program has three storytelling results. A search of MLA convention archives from 2004 to 2013 with the search term “storytelling” reveals twenty-seven sessions during that nine-year period. The 2011 convention was headed by Sidone Smith, MLA president, and its theme related to her interest, Life Story. A general search of the NCTE website using the term “storytelling” shows 1,000 results in any instance where the term was used which includes material for students of all ages, teacher-training materials, lesson plans, Table of Contents, policy statements, jobs, audio broadcasts, various materials from readwritethink.org and the literacylearningexchange.org. In 1992, NCTE published “A Guideline for Teaching Storytelling: A Position Statement from the Committee on Storytelling.” At the 2013 convention in Boston, there were five sessions with eleven presentations relative to storytelling ranging from film to fairy tale writing in elementary school. Of note is a general presentation by Judith Black and Kevin Cordi, “NCTE Storytelling Presents ‘Esau My Son’ (revisiting a Difficult Child/Student) by Professional Storyteller Judith Black.” Dr. Cordi teaches at Ohio Dominican University and is also a storyteller. The levels for the sessions included Elementary, Middle, and Secondary, Teacher Education, and General; the Topics of Interest included Writing, Policy, Politics, and Social; Literature, 21st-Century. In 2012, there were twenty sessions and “College” was added to the Level. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) revealed one presentation in 2013 and four presentations in 2012. One

presentation on digital storytelling in the writing center was offered at the IWCA conference in 2008.

To obtain a more accurate picture of storytelling within the field of English and globally, I conducted a search of the University of Pennsylvania English Department's CFP site. This is a go-to site I use for information about Calls for Papers because I can look up conferences by topic. The site also lists Call for Papers (CFPs) from professional organizations. The search term "storytelling" on the site brings up an array of 209 results showing conference and article publishing opportunities. Some results are repeated more than once, and some results key into websites. Many results are associated with regional MLA conferences such as a CFP for SAMLA 2013 for a "panel addressing any aspect of technology, entanglement, or multimodal/transmedia storytelling in children's and adolescents' literature, poetry, media, and games." The 2012 NeMLA posted a CFP for a panel on "Storytelling and Identity." The following gives a general idea of some of the results of the search of the University of Pennsylvania's site (see Table 6).

Table 6

Examples of Storytelling Conferences

Year	Place or Group	Title or Topic
2014	NeMLA	“Narrating Trauma in Iraq Wars
2013	Zurich University of Teacher Education	“Tell Me a Story, Show Me the World”
2013	Prague, Czech Republic	4 th Global Conference of Inter-disciplinary.Net
2012	Hunter College Graduate English Club	“Storytellers: Crafting, Testifying, Fibbing”
2011	International Society for Cultural History and Cultural Studies (CHICS)	“Storytelling, Memories, and Identity Construction”
2010	Salzburg, Austria	5 th Global Conference: Cyber Cultures: Exploring Critical Issues
2010	Neuman University Institute for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development	Any submission relating to spirituality, storytelling, and athletics.
2008	American Studies Association	Stories at the Center: The Role of Storytelling in the New Radical Geographical Imagination

Source: The University of Pennsylvania English Department’s Call for Papers
Website

Conferences are global and reflect issues of today—trauma, military veterans returning to college, identity, various aspects of technology. Not listed is the annual professional organization for storytellers, the National Storytelling Network (NSN) with its annual National Storytelling Conference with its Special Interest Groups (SIG): Healing Story Alliance; Producers and Organizers; Storytelling in Higher Education; Storytelling in Organizations; and Youth, Educators, and Storytellers. Its absence from the site may mean SIG organizers may not be aware of the website for a CFP for SIGs sessions.

A search of the Internet adds more conferences for storytelling. For

instance, the FoST conference, “Future of Storytelling: Reinventing the Way Stories Are Told” met in New York in October 2013. The speakers represented a cross section of cutting edge storytelling people and organizations: Melcher Media; Alexis Lloyd, Creative Director, *New York Times* Research and Development Lab; Andy Hendrickson, Chief Technology Officer, Disney Animation Studios; Dr. Andreas Heinrich, IBM Almaden Research Center; Jennifer Aakar, General Atlantic Professor of Marketing, Stanford University Graduate School of Business; Kevin Slavin, Assistant Professor, MIT Media Lab; Robert Wong, Chief Executive Officer, Google Creative Lab; Tom Perlmutter, Chairperson, National Film Board of Canada, and Government Commissioner. Cutting-edge topics and technology are important to education.

Neighborhood Bridges, a storytelling program for children, was developed by Dr. Jack Zipes in Minneapolis. In the K-5 school, 85% of the children were impoverished based on the financial support for the lunch program, many were African-American or Hmong, 15% of the students were homeless. Children were exposed to storytelling with a professional teller; they also had the opportunity to tell, write, and perform story. One of the main goals was “to animate children to question the world around them and to participate in that world by telling their own story” (DeMark163). When the local school board decided to close ten percent of the city’s schools, people gathered to discuss the matter with the board. Five 5th graders from the Neighborhood Bridges program attended the public meeting of more than 350 people and stood and presented an argument that was “clear” and “articulate” and told their story (DeMark 162). The practice

and performance of storytelling seemed to give students an ease in presenting information to a large audience.

Jay Stailey, a storyteller and elementary school principal, and Dr. Ruby Paine wondered how they could transfer the hidden knowledge of how to be successful to children. Stailey's school had a 90% poverty rate based on the lunch program figures, and almost one-third of the elementary school population was taught in another language while half the school population could not pass the Texas assessment test. The need for answers was desperate. Dr. Paine had published *Poverty: A Framework for Understanding and Working with Students and Adults in Poverty*. Stailey and Payne's book, *Think Rather of Zebra: Dealing with Aspects of Poverty Through Story*, addresses the notion of teaching children cultural success with stories that teach.

The two examples here of applications of storytelling in elementary schools were developed to teach success through story—whether performing story in public or listening to tales reflecting ways of managing change. However, there are two developments in storytelling at the university level that signify, to me, a renewed vision for rejoining the arts and the recognition of the importance of the oral/aural experience as separate from a speech, a conversation, a drama performance, or a linguistic study.

First, story centers are now at Stanford University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. These centers combine technology and narrative and explore story as a power to transform lives, as a platform to share story, and as a teaching tool. Stanford University developed the Stanford Storytelling Project, a

new arts program, which “explores how we live in and through stories and how we can use them to change our lives” (“Mission”). Oral storytelling in traditional and modern modes is promoted as students perform stories of their own making. The Project also includes a radio program, workshops, various courses, and telling events. StoryLab is associated with the program and is a workshop available once a week in the Hume Writing Center. One hour is devoted to playing with story and two hours mentoring faculty and students (“StoryLab”). The university also offers various storytelling courses—four for the spring semester.

In addition, The Center for Future Storytelling at the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is similar. Their mission is to examine technology and art “particularly as related to creative expression through story forms—in ways that elevate the human experience” and “to transform audiences into active participants in the storytelling process, bridging the real and virtual worlds, and allowing everyone to make and share their own unique stories” (“Center”).

The second development is located at Carnegie Mellon’s West Coast campus which is applying storytelling to learning. Roger Schank and Tammy Berman relate the way Carnegie Mellon’s West Coast campus applies narrative to graduate student learning in “Living Stories: Designing Story-Based Educational Experiences”; learning takes place when one remembers information and applies it, especially when there is reason to remember it. People teach themselves through experience and that learning sticks (F.Smith

13-14). People remember and repeat stories, especially when learning takes place through a mistake or difficult situation. Working with “a story-centered curriculum,” graduate students in Computer Science enter a program in which the professors have planned backwards. In other words, the faculty began with what a professional might experience in ideal situations. Then they contemplated what goes wrong so that students enter the curriculum as a lived story experiencing the reality of learning on their own and problem solving, as a professional would (Schank and Berman 220-23).

Other fields and applications of storytelling exist. Sociologists view culture through narratives, historians explain events (now understood through biased perspectives), lawyers argue conflicting stories in court, psychotherapists seek to create meaning through making sense of lives, and literary theorists focus on specific aspects of narrative. I briefly mention the publications of some common disciplines and topics with totals and titles connected with a search in Academic Search Complete using *storytelling* and the topic with the same qualifiers of text, dates, and peer-reviewed articles as previously discussed. I list the topic with the number of publications found next and, finally, a sample of article titles and journal titles (see Table 7).

Table 7

Storytelling Articles in Various Disciplines

Topic	Results	Examples of Titles
Psychology	44	“Emotional Facial and Vocal Expressions During Story Retelling by Children and Adolescents with High Functioning Autism.” <i>Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research</i>
Science	34	“Sober as Deviant: The Stigma of Sobriety and How Some College Students ‘Stay Dry’ on a ‘Wet’ Campus” <i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i>
Literature	24	“Storytelling at the Police Station” <i>British Journal of Criminology</i>
Sociology	16	“The End of an Idyllic World: Nostalgia Narratives, Race, and the Construction of White Powerlessness” <i>Critical Sociology</i>
Law	8	“Using Mediation Stories to Improve the Teaching of Conflict Resolution” <i>Law Review</i>

Source: *Academic Search Complete Database*. Web. October 2013.

Some articles appear on more than one list, so the total is not static.

There are other specific and perhaps, uncommon, examples of storytelling. Grant writing applies broadly across the society wherever there is a financial need and the possibility of grants to supply that need. In *Storytelling for Grantseekers: A Guide to Creative Nonprofit Fundraising*, Cheryl A. Clarke notes that publications on grant writing focus on mechanics and ignore “creativity and passion” which storytelling can supply (xvi).

Religions are frequently based on stories, and sermons include anecdotal material. However, oral storytelling is experiencing a revival in Christian circles. Tom Boomershine, a professor at United Theological Seminary, is co-founder of

the Network of Biblical Storytellers and author of *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling*. The Network is an international organization with groups meeting annually in various countries. The *Bible* is presented orally as a performance art.

Oral histories are another venue for story. Howard Sacks, professor at Kenyon College, notes that oral history projects can “document...interpret...[and] contribute to civic action,” depending on one’s purpose (14). With his students, he documented and told the story of the African American community in an Ohio county whose presence was absent from the local historical museum. Sacks and his students have also explored a local river and written a booklet telling its story with a timeline for people and events. Another project, the Family Farm Project, contributed to building a sustainable food program from local sources which now includes a farmers’ market and food such as fresh eggs and produce in Kenyon College’s meal plans (H.Sachs 10-15). Commenting on the broad applicability of oral history from church histories to family farms, Sacks comments that oral history “demonstrate[s] that our everyday experiences and perspectives *are* important, that history is not just the purview of the rich and powerful” (10). Whether writing a grant, telling a gospel narrative, or documenting a local geographical feature, story flourishes within and across communities.

Scientists have sought to answer why story appeals to people. Stories are involved with brain empathy. In one incident, scientists at Princeton University asked a woman fluent in English and Russian to tell a story in each language to volunteers in an MRI. As volunteers who only understood English listened, their

brain activity was scanned: “[T]he more the listeners understood the story the more their brain activity dovetailed with the speaker’s. There was no corresponding activity when she spoke in Russian” (Gowin). The empathizing connections between the brains of a teller and those of a listener seem remarkable.

Joseph Campbell suggests that myth is part of reality: “myths are a function of nature as well as of culture, and as necessary to the balanced maturation of the human psyche as is nourishment to the body” (3). Likening myth to the necessity of food suggests the place of myth in the life of an individual. Sachs goes further and sounds an alarm stating that there is a gap in today’s society between this time in history and the “shared stories to which we turn for explanation, meaning, and instruction for action”; as a result, professional marketers see the need and fill it, a need resulting from the faltering of “religion, science, and entertainment” (58). Bronislaw Malinowski, a British anthropologist, adds that myths function to express and organize our beliefs, to protect and carry out morality, and validate traditions and rules. Humankind has never had a time, as far as we know, of living without myths—“it is uncharted territory in the history of human civilization” (Sachs 58-59).

The attraction to story is common to humankind. We connect to stories that relate victory over adversity, over our inhumanity to one another, over greed, over the risk of the lack in our own natures. Stories give us identity and the possibility of transformation. People communicate naturally through story. It also touches our inner values and spirit as well as acknowledges cultural sounds. It

“feeds our deepest hungers” for community (Degh 9; Birch 12). The storyteller Minato states the tribe is “charged with the responsibility of remembering and telling the tribe’s stories so that the people will always know who they are, so that the children of the tribe can be brought up to know they belong to a certain people and what their history is” (qtd. in Smythe 7). The stories of our cultures, our histories, our memories of the times, are, according to Ken Burns, “the building blocks, the DNA of our collective American experience” (7). We think in story, pass on information in narrative, and learn through story which has a power that “transforms, changes, and transfigures the one who takes it in” (Yolen 16). The social and individual need for story is evident across our society through the variety of vehicles carrying story and through the saturation of story in most areas of society. Joseph Bruchac sums up the association and reality of story for himself: “I didn’t have to be ashamed when I was afraid, that I could learn to be brave, that there were times of sorrow and times for joy, that things were always going to change, and that some things—like love, courage, hope, and faith—were unchanging” (*xii*).

To sum up, narrative is applied broadly across cultures and disciplines. Peer-reviewed journals from psychology, education, science, history, sociology, counseling, management, communications, public relations, sociology, business, literature, healthcare, technology, education, and leadership have published material on storytelling in the past year. In addition, dissertations with storytelling as a keyword reflect the growing interest in storytelling, especially in the past two years. Case studies, oral histories, grant writing, ethnographies, video games,

blogging, social media, LARP, simulations, and interactive learning are a few applications of the ways storytelling reflects values, manages knowledge, and influences learning (see Table 8 for a condensed visual of the storytelling references in this section).

Table 8

What Does Storytelling Do?

Reflects group culture	Affects Learning	Connects emotion & learning
Engages cultural foundation	Engages people interactively	Aids memory
Portrays values	Locates people within history	Encourages resilience
Establishes identity	Lies at heart of innovation	Promotes healing
Touches hearts and minds	Benefits social-based learning	Aids transformational change
Patterns behavior	Promotes literacy connections	Portrays constants
Enables transformation	Communicates naturally	Inspires new ideas
Presents facts compellingly	Gives insight	Illustrates ideas
Creates context	Strengthens ties	Influences perspectives
Clarifies meaning	Influences decision making	Reflects consumer values
Frames information	Impacts team building	Patterns behavior

Folklore/Folklife

My interest in folklore as a topic suitable for first-year composition students came from my involvement with storytelling as an oral art. Folklore had not been part of my background, or so I thought. As I learned tales and connected them to cultures, I became aware of the ubiquitous nature of folklore. It is a massive and complex topic, so I limit my discussion to definitions, a passing history, and brief discussion of salient points as preparation for the

discussion of my research questions. The purpose of this section is to answer the question: What Is Folklore? I used the term “Folklore/Folklife” as the title of this section. Folklife is the more current term, a distinction I was unaware of at the beginning of my research. This section follows the development of folklore/folklife.

Folklore is a term referencing “traditional beliefs, legends, and customs current among common people” or implying “popular fantasy” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (“Folklore” a, b). The term suggests “just a story or an old fashioned belief” (Sims 1). In *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions*, Martha C. Sims notes the difficulty of defining folklore when she states it is “impossible to define succinctly” (1). The understanding of what folklore encompasses expanded with its growth as a field of academic study, and this section will reflect that development.

For centuries, higher education and its recognition of what was of historical importance were reserved for the elite, and the oral traditions of the “folk” were not acknowledged by historians (Brunvand *Readings* 449; Wilson 452). However, the surge toward nationhood in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and its searches for that which identified regions and peoples influenced a rising interest in ordinary people. In Germany, Johann Gottfried Herder inspired romantic nationalism, linked the language of the peasant to the notion of nationalism and considered the origins of national character were contained in the poetry of ordinary people—the folk. During the first half of the nineteenth century, countries responded to the growing sense of nationalism with

the collection of local tales passed orally and then published: In Finland, the *Kalevala*; in Germany, *Kinder- und Hausmarchen* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm; in Norway *Norske-eventyr og Folkesagen* by P.C. Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe—all adding to literature the sense of “folk spirit” or “*Volksgeist*” (Zumwalt 76-77). Folklore became associated with the notion of the “popular antiquities of romantics” and centered on “items” handed down from previous generations (Brunvand, “New” 429; Ben-Amos 434). In 1888, the American Folklore Society (AFS) was founded (About the American). State and regional folklore societies soon followed.

Folklore was influenced by various disciplines as it developed into a field of study. Interest in the humanities increased in the nineteenth century so that “folklore (Volkskunde), anthropology (ethnology), linguistics, history, comparative literature, comparative religion, customary law, and psychology” interacted with each other, and each created its own ways of organization, methodology, and theoretical foundations to meet discipline needs (Degh 25). This multi-discipline influence became problematic for folklore. Centers and archives for folklore did not discern between the professional folklorist and scholars from other disciplines who brought their own ways of working and terminology, thus “blurring ... the disciplinary aims of folkloristics” and creating many perspectives (Degh 26). Dan Ben-Amos, professor of Folklore & Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, states that anthropologists connected folklore to literature which they thought was an “exotic topic”; however, literature scholars thought of folklore as “culture” (428). The AFS shared conferences with

the Modern Language Association (MLA) and with the American Anthropological Association until 1964 and 1965, respectively, when it then sought to establish its own identity apart from literature and anthropology (Brunvand “New” 419).

Structure and orality guided early folklorists. Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson examined structural commonalities among folktales and created a classification system still in use today. Philology also influenced the field with a verbal focus and, in the United States, that “meant spoken and sung traditions”; in Europe, folklore emphasis centered on the “customary” and the “material” (Dorson qtd. in Brunvand, “New” 420; 419). When orality became one of the qualifying aspects of folklore, a whole range of verbal genres that had been passed through the generations without referencing written texts were now included. However, there was a need for that which unified the broad aspects of a field that included “jokes and myths, gestures and legends, costumes and music” (Ben-Amos 435, 429).

In addition, folklore’s focus on the past limited the study of context by neglecting broader aspects of the continuation of folklore in the present. The notion of *metafolklore*—the context—is essential to Alan Dundes who advocated the need to intentionally search for the “*meaning of folklore from the folk*” (407, emphasis in the original). Dundes relates the notion of context to keeping unusual musical instruments in museums as opposed to having the same instruments played in homes. Authenticity is not questioned; however, the range of a particular instrument, how to tune it, and the knowledge of playing it are not usually included in the museum collection (405-406). The term *folklife* became

current in the 1960s to portray a broader picture of folklore material beyond the oral.

The expanding definitions of folklore created ongoing discussions which included conceptions of tradition and performance. By 1972, folklore turned from an emphasis on an item from the past as part of a collection to a focus on performance as an all-inclusive communicative presentation. The movement to performance did not mean ignoring tradition. For Dell Hymes, performance included moving from an objective detachment of a report into a “breakthrough” of performance (Mould 128). In the past, a story might be the focus or the “item,” but now the teller and the audience were included as context in the single act of communication in presenting the story (Ben-Amos 427). As a teller of stories, I have found this to be true beyond the uniqueness of each occasion because of place, time, audience, conditions, and the way the stories are told. Sometimes a rapport occurs between a teller and audience that cannot be predicted. The sense of an audience moving as one with a teller is profound—a gift when it occurs to both teller and audience. This dynamic is not limited to a teller but can occur with a speaker, dancer, singer, or other performing artist.

Tradition is not the duplication of items from the past but rather a movement from the past to the future which centers upon the performance of the individual because without the attention of a person, the past slips away, according to Ray Cashman, Tom Mould, and Pravina Shukla, editors of *The Individual and Tradition: Folkloristic Perspectives*. Traditions can be revived particularly when a link is required due to “a gap in time, knowledge, or practice”

(Duffy 195). For instance, Wanda Aragon, from New Mexico, revived tradition in pueblo pottery as she copied her mother's designs, researched the ancestral designs of her great grandmother, and sought museum photographs (Duffy 201-204). Tradition is both a process and a resource transporting change onward; the former through an individual creatively working with recognized ways and the latter through a resource reflecting "handed-down knowledge and ways of knowing" (Cashman, Mould, Shukla 2-4). Again, for me, storytelling illustrates the concept. I became interested in storytelling and learned to tell stories from listening to ordinary people like myself who practiced it. I developed an awareness of printed stories and the lived narratives around me from an oral and aural narrative perspective, and my life changed. I entered into the storytelling tradition as a process and learned. However, Ray Hicks, designated a Master Folk Artist by the Smithsonian Institute, can trace oral stories in his family to a mid-eighteenth-century member of his family, Council Harmon. Hicks is known for his store of Jack tales, one of which is commonly known to Americans as "Jack in the Bean Stalk." However, Hicks knows a plethora of Jack stories usually centered upon the theme of survival with a lad named Jack (Curtis, *A Voice* 27-31). I am in the process of learning the ancient art of storytelling; Ray Hicks lived his life in the storytelling ways of knowing handed to him through family generations. Tradition is not static; tradition is both "knowledge" and "art" (Ben-Amos 434).

The sense of performance and tradition expanded beyond orality. The stone carvers working on the Washington National Cathedral saw themselves as

“performers, as creative individuals engaged in the skillful act of interpretation” (Hunt 48). Performance came to mean more than the act itself; it included that which “surrounds performance in the mind and influences the creation of texts Learning what artists know, learning their history and culture and environment, is one way to reconstruct invisible associations, to pump blood into dry texts” (Glassie qtd. in Hunt 51). The idea of the cathedral stone carvers as folk artists places a different perspective on folklore content.

Tradition needs dedicated people with inside knowledge as well as people outside of a tradition who have vision and ideological motivation to participate. Shukla notes in “The Maintenance of Heritage” that the tradition of costume in Sweden ebbs and flows and needs a consistent sense of preserving costume, custom combined with innovation, and actors to carry the costume tradition forward (128-129). Any re-enacting tradition requires this balance.

As members of the Texas Army, my husband and I participated in the reenactment of the battle of San Jacinto with period-correct tent, equipment, and clothing. I made my husband’s shirt, my dress, and my bonnet with a sewing machine, which was acceptable to the Texas Army. However, some reenactment groups are so exacting that tradition means hand-sewn clothing. I have found that the purpose of an event influences details. The Texas Army permitted unobvious machine stitching perhaps because the purpose of the event was to share the story of early settlers and create a sense of the living history of Texas. People might not participate if they had to sew clothing by hand. A balance of realities was considered to enact tradition moving forward.

Folklore recognizes the importance of sense-based knowledge influencing tradition and performance. For instance, Henry Glassie refers to Turkish potters who address a sense of place:

[They] do not speak of passing things along, but of breathing in the air. You live in a cultural environment, and the air you breathe circulates through you to emerge in actions that are yours alone but can be called traditional because you created them out of the general experience of life in some place. Your works will be like those created by others who breathe the same air The tradition that binds you is like the air around you, sustaining you.
(qtd. in Hunt 54)

The atmosphere of a place or of a group of people can be conducive to learning and creatively seeking knowledge. For example, Wanda Aragon cites the need to touch ancient pueblo pots to hear “the hands that made it” (Duffy 211).

Another potter was told that a particular glaze should feel like buttermilk.

Knowledge and learning came as he immersed his hands and felt it drip from his fingers. He commented his school knowledge was scientific, but his insider knowledge came from feeling the texture of buttermilk with his fingers (Zug 35).

Food preparation carries similar ways of knowing. I’ve made my own whole wheat bread for years, and the knowledge of the dough is related through touch—how it feels in my hands. That knowledge was passed to me by a Scottish woman forty years ago. I noticed a similar knowing with women in Texas making tortillas.

Knowledge that depends on sensory communication and an elusive “knowing” is difficult to describe in text. The knowledge continues beyond kinesthetic experience and relates to the identity of a people. Shukla notes that genres such as songs, recipes, or costumes may seem unimportant but reflect the “history, geography, identity—the essence—of the people to whom they belong” (145). Folklore acknowledges the importance of the ways of knowing and living produced by ordinary people living in a community, or as Sylvia Ann Grider notes in “Con Safos: Mexican-Americans, Names and Grafitti,” “great folk art is made with an awareness of and a connection to tradition, community, and place” (124).

The worth of folklore has been questioned. Some consider collections “trivial,” for folklorists reckon everything of value (Bond 7). Others look for a stable truth and question the uniqueness of a performance or the flexibility of genre classifications depending on how a culture views a narrative or oral tradition (Ben Amos 430). Historians question the veracity of folklore based on the elusiveness of orality, especially when passed through the centuries (Wilson 456-457). Tracking the diffusion and differentness of folklore material is part of the field. Replication or exactness or “truth” is not the issue. Contributing to academic perceptions seems to be the dilemma of where to place folklore. For instance, in 1950 the Modern Language Association conference placed Stith Thompson’s presentation, “Folklore at Mid-Century,” in the Popular Literature Section (Brunvand, “New” 419). In addition, folklore’s history of broadly applying to many disciplines continues today. A search of the university and colleges with

folklore programs listed on the AFS website reveals that folklore is housed in the following departments: English, Anthropology, American Studies, various Cultural Studies, Education, and Folklore. Finally, worth may depend on what is valued at the time. For instance, editors were assigned to catalogue different genres of the Frank C. Brown collection of North Carolina which reflects the interests of Dr. Brown from 1912 to 1943. However, entire areas were ignored or deemed unimportant, and only one editor listed everything in the genre assigned (Bond 7). Indeed, one has only to look at slave narratives and postcolonial literature for examples of what was not valued at the time, for what was absent from the academic histories.

Folklorists kept alive the words, songs, games, rituals, and more of various individuals and people groups. The songs and stories may have been considered trivial by some, but with research, some of the examples of oral tradition have proven more accurate than historical records. For instance, Ivan the Terrible is now understood through Russia's folk music, and the Scottish ballad, "The Battle of Harlow," preserved the details of the battle better than did the histories. In addition, archeologists found that stories from the Paiute Indians in Southern Utah reflected the eight-hundred year old archeological material. The stories provided "accurate account of economic institutions, material culture, physical stature of the people, and intertribal relations" (Wilson 456-457; 451). The December 26, 2004 tsunami is another example of a folktale with seeds of truth. One rescue volunteer related that people on one island survived because they remembered one of their folktales that told of a people who fled to higher

ground when they saw the ocean retreating. They did not realize the truth of the description until they saw the retreating ocean themselves.

The work of folklore is broad and based on fieldwork, an essential aspect of folklore. *Folklife and Fieldwork: A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques* suggests six categories of investigation: Oral/Musical; Material Culture; Family Life; Foodways; Beliefs; and Festivals, Dramas, Rituals (Bartis 4-5). Sims reduces categories to three: "verbal" lore which includes spoken and sung material; "material" objects which can be observed or physically touched; and "customary" behavior—that which is repeated (12-16). It is not the purpose of this dissertation to delve deeply into these categories but to present the information as relevant to the research questions discussion later.

The field is academic and housed in universities and colleges globally. In the United States, the American Folklore Society website lists thirty institutions of higher education with folklore programs ranging from certificate programs and undergraduate minors to advanced degrees. The departments housing folklore studies vary as stated above. Some universities house specialized centers associated with their programs such as the Ethnomusicology Institute at Indiana University-Bloomington, the Americo Paredes Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Texas-Austin, and the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Professional publications include *Journal of Folklore Research*, *Journal of American Folklore*, *Folklore*, *Western Folklore*, *Oral Tradition*, *Folklore Forum*, *Cultural Analysis*, *Asian Ethnology*, *Indian Research Journal*, *Museum of*

Anthropology Review, *Children's Folklore Review*, *Digest*, *The Folklore Historian*, *Jewish Cultural Studies*, and *New Directions in Folklore* among others. AFS produces the *Journal of American Folklore*, the MLA volume on folklore, maintains thirty interest groups, and partners with various organizations. For instance, AFS partners with Ohio State University to create Open Folklore, a website, and digital archive. Special research interests are extensive and come from the AFS membership application. I list them at the end of this section to show their possible relationship with student backgrounds and interests:

The field contains rich resources and archives. Although the American Folklife Center Archive became part of the Library of Congress Music Division in 1928, the American Folklife Center was established by Congress in 1976 to “preserve and present American folklife’ through programs, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibitions, publications, and training” (“About the American”). Another resource is the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, part of the research and educational arm of the Smithsonian Museum. The Center is responsible for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, the Smithsonian Folkways Magazine, and maintains the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, in addition to making films, providing educational material for teachers and students, and other responsibilities. Finally, resources and local archives are often housed in state folklore organizations. Thirty-seven states have folklore organizations, but some states have more than one organization. For instance, New York has twenty-four groups. Organizations vary

from a state heritage or cultural arts-based society to regional or local organizations to preserve folkways. Some of these resources and archives are online and available to students.

The development of the academic field of folklore has broadened the definition of folklore—and it is not a “tidy” topic. It now includes the diffusion of literary and oral texts over a geographic area; textual patterns including epic laws, oral formulas, and oral genres; structure; personal interpretation; and Ethnopoetics, in addition to theories of performance, feminism, and psychoanalysis (Zumwalt 92-93). Jan Harold Brunvand, Professor Emeritus at the University of Utah and author of numerous books including *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, alludes to the *mélange* of academic interests and quest for definitions when he refers to “players in the definitions game” and adds, “[u]nder the influence of anthropology, sociology, psycholinguistics, and communications theory, those who would formulate a better definition are now doing it in terms of interpersonal relations, interaction rituals, and other communicative processes” (“New” 422). However, Martha C. Sims states most clearly, for me, the understanding of folklore as actively present in most aspects of life:

[F]olklore is informally learned, unofficial knowledge about the world, ourselves, or communities, our beliefs, our cultures, and our traditions that is expressed creatively through words, music, customs, actions, behaviors, and materials. It is also the interactive, dynamic process of creating, communicating, and performing as we share that knowledge with other people. (8)

Folklore recognizes the knowledge of ordinary people, whether a specialty craft or the linguistic wisdom of a proverb. The term *folklife* seems to be more broadly in use today. Congress defined *folklife* in 1976 when the American Folklife Center was created. I cite it in full for it adds depth to the discussion:

American folklife is the traditional, expressive, shared culture of various groups in the United States: familial, ethnic, occupational, religious, and regional. Expressive culture include a wide range of creative and symbolic forms, such as custom, belief, technical skill, language, drama, ritual, architecture, music, play, dance, drama, ritual, pageantry, and handicraft. Generally these expressions are learned orally, by imitation, or in performance, and are maintained or perpetuated without formal instruction or institutional direction. ("Introduction: What Is Folklife?" emphasis in original)

These definitions are general and apply broadly across cultures to knowledge learned through informal means and shared with others. I include the various definitions because each adds more insight. For instance, a more specific listing including family histories, yard art, gardening, and neighborhoods occurs in Peter Barts' *Folklife and Fieldwork: A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques*. The American Folklore Society website lists more than forty areas of interest (see Table 9).

Table 9

Areas of Interest in Folklore

African American Folklore	Archiving	Folk Architecture
Chicano/a and Latino/a Folklore	Bodylore	Folk Art
Children’s Folklore	Foodways	Folk Craft
Ethnic Folklore	Gesture	Folk Custom
Family Folklore	Jokes & Humor	Folk Dance
Immigrant folklore	Myth	Folk Drama
Internet folklore	Oral History	Folk Legend
Native American Folklore	Play & Games	Folk Medicine
Occupational Folklore	Proverbs	Folk Music & Song
Public Folklore	Riddles	Folk Narrative
Refugee Folklore	Ritual	Folk Speech & Dialect
Women’s Folklore	Festivals and Celebrations	Space, Place, and Landscapes
Folklore & Creative Writing	Folklore Theory	History of Folklore Studies
Folklore and Education	Costume, Dress and Adornment	
Folklore and Literature		
Folklore, Politics, and Social Justice		
Folklore and Public Policy		

Source: The Membership Application for the American Folklore Society

The areas of interest above are more specific than the Sims definition with its general terms such as “beliefs” or “cultures” and may give students a better grasp of ideas for essay topics.

The field of folklore has developed from collecting and analyzing oral tales to a field that touches every aspect of life. Folklife acknowledges knowledge learned outside of a formal institution or program and passed on to others in a variety of ways. Once considered trivial, its fieldwork exemplifies the importance of the ordinary. With a scholarly application across disciplines, the field of folklore/folklife contains a multitude of possible research subjects for first-year composition students.

Heritage Literacy

As I was preparing my proposal for this study and thinking of various topics that could be expanded for first-year composition students, I thought of the literacy essay. It is a common assignment in many first-year and upper-level composition courses and asks students to create a history of the way they learned to read and write. It serves many purposes. It familiarizes students with concepts of literacy, introduces the student to the instructor, accesses student knowledge and reflection, and coincides with learning narrative structure. I felt more could be done with the topic. When I was writing my literacy narrative, I remember feeling as though I had only scratched the surface for I was grappling with the concept of “literacy” and responding to an “easy” assignment with a deadline. In this section, I review various terms that are related to heritage literacy and clarify what the term encompasses.

The terms that apply to the literacy essay are varied. A Google search of *heritage literacy* netted *heritage language literacy*, *literacy narratives*, *autobiographical literacy*, *language memories*, and *linguistic autobiographies*.

Heritage language literacy can refer to learners from families who speak a language that is different from the dominant language in the area or nation. Speakers are familiar with both language systems and seek to learn the home language as their ability grows in the language of the host country (Chevalier). Learners may have “near native” aural and oral comprehension but because of the lack of instruction in the home language, it is not acquired completely (Lyutykh). Caleb Corkery refers to literacy narratives that reflect a student’s personal literacy experience as a journey of learning, while Judith C. Lapadat expands on the journey metaphor as she writes of the autobiographical memories of language and literacy development of nine Canadian women. The women specifically considered their language development, people who influenced their literacy and language learning, events and situations of note, and the effects of literacy and language in their lives. Aneta Pavlenko presents autobiographic narratives as linguistic autobiographies with an emphasis on “how and why these languages were acquired, used, or abandoned” (165).

However, in “Heritage Literacy: Adoption, Adaption, and Alienation of Multimodal Literacy Tools,” Suzanne Kesler Rumsey adds another dimension. She connects literacy and heritage knowledge passed through the generations and community which is subject to decisions of acceptance or rejection. In an auto-ethnographic study based on Amish participants and four generations of her own family, Rumsey observes the flexibility required in the tension between Amish values and living. Her description of heritage literacy is worth quoting in full:

Heritage literacy is an explanation of how people transfer literacy knowledge from generation to generation and how certain practices, tools, and concepts are adapted, adopted, or alienated from use, depending on the context. It is life long, cross-generational learning and meaning making; it is developmental and recursive; and like all literacies, it builds over time or ‘accumulates,’ Heritage literacy, then, describes how literacies and technology uses are accumulated across generations through a decision-making process. As literacy for an individual, community or group accumulates, contexts, objects, tools, and needs change; in turn, community members adapt to the changes, adopt the changes, or alienate themselves from the changes. (575-76)

This definition incorporates generational and community knowledge, tools, and practices with an understanding of literacy and focuses on a decision-making process. In each generation, individuals, consciously or unconsciously, question literacy applications and thus become engaged in reflective choices involving questions, assessment, and rethinking. Rumsey notes the literacy connected to Amish culture—the *Bible*, fiction and non-fiction, correspondence, and publications within the community—and contrasts the choices an Amish mother makes as she balances her values and culture and chooses a public school education with computer literacy for her 6th-grade daughter (578).

Heritage literacy incorporates the concept of multi-modal literacy which includes non-print or alphabetic literacies. Rumsey builds on Ellen Cushman and

Shirley Brice Heath's understandings of intergenerational literacy practices.

Cushman notes that knowledge of working with beads "codifies tradition, cultural practices, legends, ways of viewing self within world, clan and tribal affiliations, representational styles and so on, depending on its functional and rhetorical purpose" (qtd. Rumsey 576); Heath points to reading and writing interacting with the use of time and space in Roadville and Trackton homes (Rumsey 576).

Rumsey suggests signification, whether imbedded in such as quilts or manner of dress, is equally part of heritage literacy. For instance, Amish dress is read and interpreted as representative of Amish values and beliefs (Rumsey 577). Amish quilts, with non-patterned material and strong patterns and rhythms reflect the Amish value to live as a separate culture, according to renowned quilt and folk art expert, Robert Shaw (qtd. in Rumsey 577). The quilts are similar to slave narrative quilts with imbedded "codes" (O. Davis 68).

Rumsey interviews four generations of women in her family and examines family quilts as literate objects in a "codified sign system" to illustrate heritage literacy as a process of "adoptions, adaptations, and alienations from literacies and technologies in the past generations of my family" (579). Heritage literacy involves knowledge passing among the generations, a multimodal understanding beyond a computer, and individual people and communities taking responsibility for what they choose to keep, discard, or change. The knowledge is passed within local communities and outside the classroom environment (584). The term "heritage literacies" can also refer to the plural literacies learned as part of one's heritage. Storytelling and folklore can be considered heritage literacies.

Rumsey's definition of knowledge passed generationally opens the experience of all people of all classes. I am particularly aware of the application of this definition as I watch the specialist I call to fix a major appliance. He has brought his son who is learning. As I look at the pipes and valves, I cannot read them—they have no meaning to me. However, they are an open book to them. I think of my students. How many of them have *insider* knowledge about cars, quilts, welding, plumbing, computers, cooking, or special occasions—areas the academy may have deemed not worthy of writing or research.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed aspects of *[re]storying the commons* to show the wealth of knowledge available for writing and research for first-year learners. The information in this chapter focused on material in ordinary people's lives. General topics overlapped. For instance, occupational folklore can be considered as an aspect of storytelling and as a literacy heritage within one's family or community. Although the material presented in this chapter covers a broad area, students can apply geographic concepts of people, place, and environment to develop topics and to connect into their insider knowledge.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS

Previously, I showcased the breadth of literacy heritages and their possible presence in students' lives today and in their future worlds of work in chapter four. In chapter six, I will consider how these literacy heritages might be applied in the first-year writing program and why there might be instances when they are not appropriate. However, this chapter addresses the practicality of writing and literacy heritages, based on some of my works, and is a potpourri of writing observations.

I first analyze some of my published and unpublished work to glean observations for those interested in writing, and then I examine the unintentional but pervasive influence and presence of literacy heritages. Don Murray suggests, *all* writing is influenced by the autobiographical and “grows from a few deep taproots that are set down in our past in our childhood” (“All” 67). The analysis of my work reveals my own development of the personal in academic writing. The idea of self-analysis as a writer is supported by Wendy Bishop, who values a writer's self-observations for the knowledge it adds to the database of composition studies (P. Bizzaro, “Reconsiderations” 258). Throughout the discussion of my works, I comment on my growth as a writer coming to voice through my works and through writing this study.

The chapter is organized around essays, small works, and reflection. I discuss three of my essays: “Catherine DuBois: Woman of Courage and Conviction”; “Beyond Texas Folklore: The Woman in Blue”; and “Moving Forward

by Degrees: Learning to Cope with Change, Challenge, and Chaos.” These works and the results of my reflection on them are studied to trace the development of the essays, the pervasiveness of literacy heritages, and my growth as a writer. The first two essays are published, and the latter is in the hands of editors. In addition, I address the importance of bits and pieces of writing in the section Small Works. The “DuBois” essay relates the search to know a seventeenth-century grandmother and the effect of her captivity by Indians on her life. The “Agreda” essay moves beyond the folklore of a seventeenth-century Texas ghostly presence, and the “Moving Forward” essay relates some of my experience in college. The Small Works section is a collection of miscellaneous thoughts, poems, words, reflections that enabled me to continue writing this dissertation. The thought of them was not part of my plan at the beginning of this dissertation. However, I found the process of writing them eased me in confronting the reality of writing this lengthy study, for I was bowed down with despair and tempted to quit. How I came to right myself through writing is part of the story of this chapter.

I discuss the circumstances of how I came to write each essay. What motivated me to interrupt my dissertation to craft a presentation or to write an essay? What drew me to the topics I wrote about? I also include the influence of oral presentations, and some of my strategies and decisions as a writer and researcher, as well as connections I make. These considerations are important to the growth and awareness of an individual as a writer—I would even say they are essential to one’s development as a writer. For instance, like many of my

students, I wrote the essays to meet immediate requirements and moved on; I was unaware of the inner workings of myself as a writer. It has been through the power of reflection that I startled myself with a perception of writing that I did not know I had; it is also through reflection that I plumb the depth of my background knowledge that ripples beneath the surface of the writing. Each section concludes with reflection.

There are three things to note. First, I cite some of the historical documents I used as sources so that the reader has a better sense of the narratives within the essays with the weight of historical writing. It is easy to slip into an academic discussion *about* a work rather than give a sense of the atmosphere and essence of it. The documents place the reader of this study within the essay narrative and create an authentic sense of trust with the scholarly references. Second, in each essay section, the parenthetical page references refer to the analyzed essay as the essay appears in the appropriate appendix, *unless specifically stating another source*. This should create a smoother flow in the document. Finally, the material in the DuBois essay is quite lengthy compared to the other sections.

Catherine DuBois: Woman of Courage and Conviction

Publication History

“Catherine DuBois: Woman of Courage and Conviction” was published by Cambridge Scholarship 2012 in *The Captivity Narrative: Enduring Shackles and Emancipating Language of Subjectivity* (See Appendix A). The essay was an extension of an ongoing personal research project and also a presentation at the

Southwest Texas Popular/American Cultural Association's conference in which I wondered what I could discover about a newly-discovered many-great grandmother who lived 350 years earlier. The essay title reflects the qualities I found even though there is little written about her.

I first heard of this woman when I was a member of a large choir preparing for our Christmas presentation. It was our custom to talk quietly as we released the rhythms of the working day to sing the songs of the evening. In a mental daze, I became aware of someone talking about a woman, a Catherine DuBois, who was captured by Indians and sang her death song as she and her children faced being burned alive at the stake. Right name, wrong century I thought, for the Catherine I knew was my great grandmother on my mother's side who lived in nineteenth-century New York. However, synchronicity was at work. Later that week I discovered a letter, written in 1940, from my great-aunt Edith in which she related an account of the capture of a Catherine DuBois and subsequent rescue by her husband, Louis DuBois. In ink now faded and with a spidery scrawl, she wrote:

At the time of the Indian uprising near Albany he lead an attack against them—after one Cather DuBois [sic], a fine singer, was stolen by the Indians—at evening where tied to a tree she got permission to sing her death song—Her voice echoed through the woods, was recognized & led her husband & friends to her rescue.

(Cruikshank)

I searched for the story online and found the Historic Huguenot Street website “where family is the story in New Paltz, New York.” Stone houses from the 1700s are preserved, and the area is designated a Historic National Landmark. The early settlers were Walloons, Protestants living in Northern France near Belgium, but who are more commonly identified with the French Protestants—the Huguenots. Louis DuBois, Catherine’s husband, was one of the original patentees for the settlement and a leader there. The Dubois family maintains a website as do other founding families.

However, the attack is only part of the story—for slavery surrounded Catherine DuBois—and I wondered if her captivity affected her. The only document reflecting her words is her last Will and Testament (LW&T). I found a copy of it in Ulster County Surrogate's record in the Houston Public Library's Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research in Houston, Texas. And in that document, Catherine DuBois addressed the future freedom of two women. The story reverberated within me and became the basis for various presentations and, eventually, the essay in 2013. I began in 2003 with “She Put It in Writing” and submitted it to the Texas Folklore Society (TFS) who published it in *Family Saga: A Collection of Texas Family Legends* in 2003. My emphasis in that work was the fact that she made an extra effort and put her wishes into writing.

A few years later, the story still echoed within me. When I saw a Call for Papers (CFP) on the University of Pennsylvania English Department’s website for a captivity panel for the Southwest Texas Popular/American Culture Associations conference in San Antonio, Texas, I thought I could rework the

DuBois material and make connections to life writing. This conference gave me the opportunity to get feedback from colleagues and to visit family in Texas. I submitted a proposal, “The Effect of Our Stories: Then and Now,” in which I focused on Catherine’s background, the accounts of the attack, and the possible effects of her story in her lifetime and on me. After the presentation, I developed the material for publication, submitted it for a book chapter with the new title, “Catherine DuBois: Woman of Courage and Conviction” (See Appendix A). Based on traditional lore, written accounts of the time, and Last Wills and Testaments, I glean snippets of information to situate an unusual woman who may well have been the first woman in America to manumit a slave.

Observations on Writing

Research information may be available in tidy accounts; however, the idea that a skeptical attitude is helpful for rhetorical analysis is ancient—text is selected, arranged, and presented to a specific group of people for a purpose. As I pursued information about how captivity affected Catherine, I dealt with varying perspectives about the Indian raid. Few accounts focused on Catherine DuBois. I had to sift through the accounts and the oral lore looking for nuances, for silences, for who was telling the story and why. I did this without thinking—as part of the research process, as part of my knowledge as a writer writing with a purpose for an audience, as part of my experience performing for an audience. When confronted with any text, past or present, rhetorical implications are present: Who wrote or pictured the text or image? Why? Who was the audience? Who is the audience now? What is the effect? What is missing? What is present?

How was the material arranged? Snippets of information can be gathered with an attitude that looks askance on tidy topics and settled stories. Because I was part of the captivity section of the conference, my main focus was to become acquainted with and to tell the story of a woman who had been a captive, who had owned slaves, and who stated her intent to free two women in her last Will and Testament.

I wrote the DuBois essay as a quasi-personal essay relating my search for a historic person. I use “I” to introduce the subject matter: “I learned of a Catherine DuBois through a letter written in 1940 by my great aunt, Edith Cruikshank” (296). I questioned if I could come to know her and the effect of her captivity and so situated myself as the narrator of that story. I relate the research about her background, her captivity, and the possible effects from her captivity. I do not use “I” again until the conclusion. I was comfortable with this limited version of a personal essay.

I knew I had a great story on captivity centered in Catherine’s Last Will & Testament (LW&T), but I needed to focus, rather than just reiterate Catherine’s capture and rescue. By asking if her captivity affected her, I thought I could build an interesting inference based on the evidence in her LW&T—but I needed to know more. Could I find more information about her, as a person, despite the lack of personal information? That question drove the research and writing. Although I knew little about 17th century life in Europe or upstate New York, I trusted the research process. I knew if I did not start out with preconceived ideas of outcomes then I could at least report results. However, I wanted more. I

hoped to tell the story of Catherine in such a way that the academic audience became engaged with her story.

I used questions continually as I dealt with the research material—questions about her, the Huguenots, the times, the items in her LW&T: Who was this woman whose words rang out from her LW&T? Who were the Huguenots? What was life like for them? What was the value of money known as pieces of eight? How did values compare for money? When did LW&Ts become so structured? What was the larger situation of captivity for Catherine? Was there any mention of how she and the other women adapted? Who, what, when, where, why, and how are tools for digging through material. I did not assume I knew the definition or the significance of anything; I also imagined what questions my audience might raise. The questions from me and from my imagined audience were a constant barrage. I prowled around words and what they meant and later organized findings as an historical backstory based on scholarly and primary sources.

As I collected research material, I frequently imagined myself within the historical “facts,” moving in the scenes and stories. With imagination, I can enter into the research as a narrative of a created world and visualize the scenes, the people, the geography, and the circumstances. As a storyteller, I tell stories from a space within the story. By this I mean that as a teller, to prepare a story, I imagine myself actively within the story, seeing sequences, sensing nuances, and feeling the rhythms of words and worlds of the situation, such as the pace of

a river, the wind, or a machine. I think of this as creating a *telling space*. We teach students to collect reliable information and to put it in a logical order for writing, but we do not teach them to apply their imagination creatively to create connections. However, students can take their research and create a lived space with themselves as a character walking within—similar to that of an avatar and its created world. The difference though is that they would be observing their responses. For instance, what do they see, hear, sense as they move within that material? What makes them pause? What is there? What is not there? What questions occur? What is the research trying to *tell* them? Creating a *telling space* as a lived world depends upon the personality of the student. Some need a quiet atmosphere to visualize and to meander through the created world of facts; some flourish in a lively oral conversation, their imaginations firing with ideas; some are stimulated through listening to music or in engaging in an action of some sort. A student's preferences dictate how impressions are stimulated and captured.

Sorting through material and choosing appropriate details can be overwhelming. The selection of those details depends upon one's perspective and purpose. For instance, if I were writing from a feminist perspective, I might have focused on why Catherine ran away from the rescue party *with* the Indians, and why her husband called out, "Stop, Trina, or I'll shoot you." I chose to acknowledge the different accounts of the captivity-rescue story, pause at the singing detail, and move lightly into the breadth of captivity around Catherine. I then examine Louis DuBois' LW&T as a character reference for Catherine and

her own LW&T as a representation of her thoughts. These details seemed pertinent to my focus: Three hundred and fifty years after her death, could I come to know this woman?

Different incidents and details will resonate with individual students. They need to be encouraged to follow that sense, even when they do not understand why something nags or lures them on. Learning to trust the response of the inner person is part of learning to trust the writing process and learning hear themselves. Murray notes the presence of a writer's inner "other self"; that self is able to see the large picture as a map and continuously scan and adjust writing; Murray adds that trust is learned as a writer experiences this inner process ("Teaching" 142). At times I liken myself to my basset hound when she lifts her head and sniffs the wind to orient herself to anything new in her world and then starts tracking the scent that resonates with her. My storyteller background orients me to a sense of story and to nuances that pertain to that—who is the audience; what is my purpose; what is my responsibility as presenter/author? When I am focused on tracking a story or research topic, I seem to operate with an awareness of what resounds with me, what continually pings, and in what ways.

Essential to this writing/research process is the understanding that one incident can yield a plethora of perspectives, but the writer chooses the perspectives that will further the narrative's driving question. Eventually, a focus emerges that will satisfy the student-writer's need at the moment. Instructors can be remiss, however, in focusing on an assignment and not addressing the

writer/composer's research material. I tend to have a hoarder mentality when it comes to research—it contains so many possibilities. What would happen if we gave students the vision of themselves as writers/composers and taught them to store research material for future projects—as a professional does? We might even teach them how to use material with a different focus and perspective—it might be an interesting way to teach focus.

Placement of information, when writing, can be vexing. For instance, I organize the research to create a historic setting that reveals the influence of Catherine's European background, the captivity/rescue story, aspects of captivity within Catherine's world, and the emphasis of captivity in her LW&T. Although the brief paragraph on Louis' LW&T shows his regard for his wife and her ability, it seems to interrupt the flow of the captivity story (308). However, the evidence of her husband's regard seemed more important to the central question of her character than the arrangement of paragraphs, and that detail did not seem to fit well anywhere else.

The arrangement of material is always a decision, and I found myself aware of a balance based on my oral background. I need to keep a tale moving to keep an aural audience engaged—to give enough detail so they can situate themselves within the story in their imagination, but not so much as to lose them. I use enough detail to portray Catherine as a woman of courage and conviction which reflects my title. I often felt like a juggler balancing the strictures of time to speak or word count with the need to present my information and get to the point of the work. As a result, much research and detail is cut from the essay. In the

DuBois essay, I applied detailed historical information but kept it balanced and subservient to the story.

The historical background is essential to establish context and meaning. I applied the personal beliefs of Catherine's family to create historical context and to identify values and create identity. For instance, it is known that Catherine's family, the Blanchan family, fled to England and then went to Mannheim because they were Huguenots—but what did that mean *at the time*? To answer that question, I researched the history of the Huguenots before Catherine was born to consider what were the stories being told and experienced by the people. People have long memories especially when they experience persecution and injustices. For instance, a friend in her eighties, whose grandmother experienced the Civil War, related to me the story of her grandmother hiding the family's horses from the Yankees who also demanded the family's quilts. My friend had been teaching me to quilt, and I appreciated the memories of materials and people invested in quilts as well as the work and the craft required to create them. The year may have been 2000 and the Civil War ancient history to me, but my friend's voice still shook with outrage as she retold and re-lived her story. Stories pass on a people's history and wisdom. I looked to the historical facts as stories about Huguenot persecution to place the times in context. (The historical background information is found on pages 297-301).

When Catherine was born about 1634, Catholics and Protestants had been warring intermittently for more than a hundred years— since the beginning of the protestant reformation in 1517. With atrocities and massacres, the times

were known as a “history of blood,” and people suffered loss of lands, property, and rights (LeFevre 3). Protestants could not hold public office or hold academic honors; they lost the right to appeal. Towns were destroyed and properties confiscated; threats of the Spanish Inquisition and burning at the stake were genuine. Soldiers were quartered in Protestant households. Those who befriended the Huguenots were fined; those who informed against them were given up to a third of a Huguenot estate (Baird 4-24). Baptismal and genealogical records were destroyed affecting people’s ability to prove identity and rights, especially for legal purposes (LeFevre *iii-iv*); even the dead were not protected in the tombs (Butler, *The Huguenots* 13). I chose details to illustrate the range of persecution but, in retrospect, I noted these details and stories often related to the losses through lack of records. Those details resonated with me.

Although I did not want to overwhelm readers with details, sometimes when researching, one topic leads to another which becomes vital information. Such was the case with the Huguenots. Not only was the Huguenot persecution vital to my narrative but also the story of their influence in the economic affairs of France and other countries. The details of their business acumen and power revealed their values as a people and as a culture. They were such an economic force in France that they carried much of the knowledge in key industries as well as in legal and financial spheres. From paper making to tanning yards for leather, from glass factories to shipping, from silk fabrics to sail cloth—all were controlled by these Protestants (Scoville, “The Huguenots” 425-429). In *The Persecution of Huguenots and French Economic Development 1680-1720*, Warren C. Scoville

suggests the ten-percent Christian minority in France controlled much of the trade in the country by 1664 (1-5). Additionally, Huguenots were frequently artisans or part of the aristocracy (Butler, *The* 13). They were well practiced in various forms of literacy—they not only had an ability to read and understand text but also the ability to read and make sense of various kinds of work as well as the political, economic, and financial nuances of the times.

I use my research to make connections based on evidence, which sometimes required inferences—filling the gaps in a list of facts. A fact exists, but sometimes it is necessary to make something of the facts—to create meaning. For instance, I state Huguenots were technically savvy and innovative because they perfected a bleaching process and made “magnificent linen”; they also developed a stocking loom thus increasing production of silk, wool, and cotton stockings; they manufactured and marketed not only the “best paper” in Europe for the finest printing in Europe but also luxury materials such as cloth of gold, silks, and velvets (Weiss 30-32). More than one example supports my claim of innovation and the variety of products illustrates, again, the breadth of their interests. This is another example of creating a *telling space*; looking at the facts, letting my story imagination rove, and listening to what it tells me.

I apply a modern term, “network,” to a connection based on research. For instance, the Huguenot business interests kept them in touch with other Protestants in Europe, and families sent sons to other families to learn aspects of business (300). I use a seventeenth-century source cited in a reference book to establish the extent of Huguenot control and effective international networking:

The Lieutenant General of the city of Caen wrote, in 1665, of the Huguenots that “since they have a better access and more experience in England and Holland due to the conformity of their religion, they handle all the trade in cloth and other merchandise which originates in this region” (Scoville, “The Huguenots” 428). An audience or reader today can quickly relate to the terms “networking” and grasp 17th-century information framed with those terms.

It was necessary to discuss the Huguenot culture to establish the cost of being Protestant, to portray the extent of the Huguenot culture of business savvy and international awareness on many levels, and to disassociate the Huguenots from the more commonly known image and lore of the Pilgrims. I tie Catherine to this atmosphere of persecution and commerce by citing sources with information about her father and her husband, Louis. Her father was well regarded in his area in France, lost properties in persecution, was named a burgher in Mannheim, and was one of the first deacons elected there. Louis is a silk merchant and his wealth is attributed to what Catherine brought to the marriage (301). The expanded historical research into the commercial power of the Huguenots created a setting for Catherine, especially through her family involvement in business. I also made the point that the refugee Huguenots, although they left properties and businesses in France, carried the trade secrets, the job literacies, and the knowledge of how to conduct business with them wherever they went. I wanted to show that despite being from an educated family of some wealth, Catherine also adapted to changed circumstances whether as

an immigrant to London or Mannheim or as a wife of a European silk merchant making her home in the wilderness.

Varying perspectives are essential to academic research and create inconsistencies. Each historic perspective of the attack adds different details from Aunt Edith's few terse sentences, to oral accounts, to the military report of the attack. In Aunt Edith's account, the attack and rescue are related in a few sentences, collapsing time between attack and rescue. In the oral tradition, details focus on "the condition of the captives" (LeFevre 7). However, in the military account, Captain Kreiger is specific. I cite only a few lines to establish the authority of his military report and to comment on the way he writes:

Kreiger writes with a detachment worthy of a modern day police report with who, what, when, where, why and how duly noted: 'September 5th. Arrived, about two o'clock in the afternoon, within sight of their [Indian's] fort, which we discovered situated on a lofty plain. Divided our force in two ...' he notes the placement of his men, the alarm of the squaw, the response of the Indians as fighting men who "courageously returned our fire," and the account of the wounded and dead on both sides. (302-303)

Taken together, the accounts give a broader understanding. Eyewitness accounts add authenticity and immediacy to an event. Captain Kreiger's preciseness stands in contrast to Aunt Edith's letter. I chose another eyewitness observation because it created a dramatic image: the "dead lay like sheaves behind a mower" (303). Inconsistencies abound such as Louis leading the

rescue party. Rather than focus on these details and argue their validity, I note that the oral account and Aunt Edith's letter collapse details. It took three months for the captives to be rescued, and this aspect of the tale becomes glossed over, effectively de-emphasizing from the account what the women and children endured.

Tradition and "Official" Accounts

I include comments about tradition by Ralph LeFevre in *History of New Paltz, New York and Its Old Families*. He points to the "tradition" of Catherine at the stake and the women singing the 137th psalm as one "dear to the Huguenot heart" and not necessarily at odds with Captain Kreiger's account (303-304). The DuBois webpage base their information on *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, and add "there is a history among us for which we are not dependent on State archives" (303). I present that wonderful phrasing but do not linger there. The story drives the material; it wasn't the place to discuss oral histories and folk traditions. I introduce differing opinions to add depth such as the Orange County historian, Em Ruttenberger, who questioned the custom of burning at the stake and LeFevre who considered the attack as revenge for the Indian chief who was sold as a slave and sent to Curacao (304).

Researcher's Preference

I was intrigued by the idea of singing in those circumstances and the specificity of singing the 137th Psalm. Although singing could have been easily ignored by another researcher as a questionable detail from the oral history, it resonated with me because of the tradition of singing psalms in the Huguenot

culture and because there were three times as many children taken captive as there were women. Songs could aurally reach the children. I write that a mother's "mindset to maintain some semblance of calm, courage, and continuity could turn to the Huguenot custom of singing" (305).

I suggest that the women can access the story within the psalm to sing their faith and build their children's confidence despite circumstances. To support that notion, I draw on the work of Dawn Henderson of the University of Toronto and her study of a later captive, Mary Rowlandson. Henderson writes that the psalms gave Rowlandson "a public, liturgical language that centers her experience in the communal sphere of meaning but also empowers her to speak passionately of her own grief, confusion, and anger" (171). The psalms were important to the Huguenots. Each psalm was given its own tune, according to research by William E. Dubois of a Folio copy of a French Bible printed in Amsterdam at the time, which states the 137th psalm would be sung in a "slow, plaintive chant in a minor mode"(306).

I briefly relate the story within the psalm: the people of Israel are captured by the Babylonians and are sitting by a riverbank: "For there they who carried us away captive required of us a song; And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of your songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" I suggest that the Huguenot captives could identify with the captivity theme and were singing death to their captors and reminding their children of their faith for the psalm continues: "O daughter of Babylon [the captors], who art to be destroyed; Happy shall he be that rewards you as you

have served us. Happy shall he be, that takes and dashes your little ones against the stones.” I write, “Although it may have been a song in the plaintive mode and in a minor key, the psalm itself is a trumpet of outrage, vengeance, and violence. The words act as a verbal curse....[for] the women key into the historical narrative of Babylonian destruction and announce that destruction to the Indians” (306). These women had survived persecution in Europe, crossed an ocean, adapted from a middle-class European life style to one styled by the wilderness; they could sing in the face of their captors.

Instances of Captivity

As I searched for information that might give me insight on how Catherine coped with captivity, I found instances of captivity surrounded Catherine all her life. For instance, the chief of the attacking Indians had been sold as a slave to Curacao which, some thought, prompted the attack; “two negro slaves” were part of the rescue which is guided by an Indian who is promised “freedom and a cloth coat” for his services as a guide). However, slavery permeates the Huguenot culture. Despite the history of Louis IV enslaving Protestant prisoners on his notorious slave galleys and despite the criticism from Protestant leaders in France and America, the Huguenots kept slaves. Records exist of the buying and selling of slaves by Louis Dubois. I wondered how Catherine coped with her own captivity and the captivity of people within her own household.

Last Wills and Testaments

Last Wills and Testaments are dry formal documents within a template structure, but they can yield insight. For instance, Louis’ LW&T appoints

Catherine as administrator of his estate which is unusual for the times, especially with seven sons in a male-dominated society. I use his LW&T to show that she was publically recognized by her husband as capable of administrating a large estate. However, it is Catherine's LW&T that, to me, spoke with her voice and values, for in it she makes provision for two slave women.

I compared Catherine's Last Will and Testament to two other wills of that time and place and found a common form similar to wills today, except that in the beginning of the 17th century LW&Ts reiterate an individual's statement of Christian faith. This statement of belief declares the lordship of Christ in the life of the individual and thus frames the Will with the individual's identity as a person of faith. Catherine states her soundness of mind and memory then reiterates a legal document freeing one of her slave women, Rachel, which "shall be observed and in full force and virtue from the first word of the page to the last word"; she also includes the indenture given to "our negress Dina shall be observed and guarded in full force and virtue" (309). Her wording seems to reflect an understanding of the power of language. Catherine's force of language, "from the first word of the page to the last word," echoes across the centuries and delights me. This woman used the power of a legal document and writing to insure the future of two women she owned.

Not only did she set women free, she used the structure of the will to make a statement, for she placed the stipulation about the slave women as the first business of the Will *before the distribution of her goods to her children*. And she did not stop there, for Catherine provided money for Rachel: "...and the said

Rachel shall have and take after my death, my said third part of the profit, 30 pieces of eight, and the other things which I stated in the said indenture, and she shall take it before my children can divide my third part of the profit” (309).

From the structure of the Will, Catherine ordered priorities—the slaves were placed before her children, Rachel was given hard cash, and the money given to Rachel was a half again more than the church received. Rachel was shown preference. To understand the value of money at the time, I consulted various primary and academic sources. John Winthrop of the Plymouth colony wrote in 1640 “The scarcity of money made a great change in all commerce...” money could only be minted in England and not exported to the colonies. In New Hampshire, by 1708 commodities were established so people could pay their taxes. A bushel of wheat was reckoned at 5 shillings. Common everyday items such as nails, beaver pelts, and alcohol also had fixed prices (310). I add this information so that the enormity of giving Rachel cash can be better comprehended by today’s audience. Based on the structure of her LW&T, Catherine makes a stand against a culture that endorses slavery and applies “the legal weight of a Will to establish her will of freedom for two women of color and financial freedom for one” (311). Although I wanted to continue this vein of research in more depth, again, I had to stay within my focus.

Reflection

When I write, I am focused on the work. Reflection makes me stand as an outsider and examine myself as a writer. And it startled me, profoundly. When I began to think about the details I chose to explore in Catherine’s story, I came to

understand that everything I wrote in that essay keyed into *writing* and *composition*. The world of text dominates the DuBois essay as in the following: Aunt Edith's handwritten letter from 1940; marriage and baptismal records of the Huguenots ; the destruction of baptismal and genealogical records as a means of reprisal to erase proof of identity for various purposes; the effect of the loss of records (the Huguenots in this New York village would guard and preserve their records so that an extensive body of documents exists including the original transaction on a hide detailing the sale of land); original accounts of the battle from differing perspectives; oral accounts; the staccato style of a 1663 police report; the psalm as a historical text applied with relevance into a larger narrative; songs and singing as an active aural/oral experience; music as text with each psalm given a separate tune; bills of sale for Louis DuBois' slaves; an indenture given to Rachel and Nina; Last Wills and Testaments—structure and form, language and template, and translations from the original tongue; money as text; and a Folio copy of a French Bible of the 17th century. Even the wilderness could be seen as a text for it is one the Huguenots cannot read to follow the captives.

The details I was drawn to involved text in one form or another. I noticed Aunt Edith's scrawl and the use of the dash instead of a period and an ampersand instead of the word "and." The style of the 1663 police report fascinated—when did military or police authorities begin to write this way and why? The template of the LW&Ts surprised me. I looked up phrasing from one Will to another and wanted to do more research to see if I could determine which phrases seemed to reflect a model and which reflected personal word choice.

When did the templates for Wills begin? The phrasing of Catherine's LW&T portrayed an understanding of the force of the law and the written word "from the first word of the page to the last." It was through seeing her Will that I connected with her as a person. I simply wrote the essay for presentation; I did not know the extent of my interest in text, in the composition of texts, until this time of reflection of my writing.

Reflection also stimulated the memory of moving within the narrative as an imaginative act. I have come to value reflection as the vehicle transporting the writer's inner knowing; as a teacher of writing I would now require reflection as part of every assignment as an opportunity to become acquainted with that inner voice. When I analyzed my process, I remembered seeing myself moving and observing within the narrative research and recognized the process as one I practiced as a storyteller—*creative imaginings* as an engaged imagination within a *telling space*. With the remembrance of engaged imagination came the memory of the land, the folklore, and the stories.

I had forgotten what I knew—for I had lived in the land and had heard stories stretching back to our Dutch ancestors in New York. I knew in summer the land lay sultry and still, heavy with heat, and when the thunder rumbled down the valleys, we said it was Henry Hudson and his men playing nine pins, the ancient term for bowling, although not thought of in half a century. Although Washington Irving immortalized the lore in *Rip Van Winkle*, local residents of Upstate New York live the folk lore as an active part of their vocabulary. As a child, my reality included Henry Hudson and his men sailing the rivers in their

seventeenth-century dress, and Indians headed south for one last raid in the Indian summer. I mouthed the Indian names—Iroquois, Mohawk, Seneca—rolling their rhythm around in my mouth, tasting their music. Finding arrow heads was a common activity for my brothers and me on Long Island when we were children, so Indian lore lived in our lives. We frequently passed through the Hudson River valley and the Mohawk valley while visiting my grandmother in Utica, New York. We visited Sir William Johnson's mansion where, in the 1700s, Indians would gather and talk with the King's men. And in a second I am a child again, remembering.

It was not until I took the time to reflect that I remembered. I knew the lay of the land, the twists of the river, the family stories of Grandpa Brink, the lore of Henry Hudson and Indian attacks in late summer, the arrow heads and the local architecture of stone houses. The hills and rivers, the scent of the marshes, the environmental knowledge situated within geographic knowledge, the stories, and the folklore comprised my background knowledge. It was there all the time in my mind, but I had not analyzed my thought process to understand that I was accessing my intimate knowledge of an area I had not thought about for years. My brothers and my mother lived and breathed history, family stories, and lore. I was the youngest, and so I listened. They anticipated geographical features of the area we traveled in, relating the hills and valleys, taverns and battlefields, to the narrative of the people who lived in the area or to a particular era of history. I came to understand rivers as the chief means of transportation for settlers and recognize colonial window structure with its twelve-over-twelve panes of glass

and learned to look for the “bull’s eye” of blown glass that showed an original pane of glass. To my family, history and lore were more current than the day’s news. I developed my spatial sense of where I was because I learned to locate north and south in relation to geographical features of the land, often connected to stories of places and people. Do others locate themselves in the same way?

Catherine’s story resonated with me. Most people experience the disruption of leaving beloved places, people, and areas. I admired her ability to adjust to new environments and cultures, to sing—either alone or with the other women—defiantly in the face of disaster; to move against her culture’s traditions of enslavement, to finance her freedom project—and to anchor her wishes in writing.

Beyond Texas Folklore: The Woman in Blue

In 2013, “Beyond Texas Folklore: The Woman in Blue” in *Cowboys, Cops, Killers, and Ghosts: Legends and Lore in Texas* was published by the Texas Folklore Society (See Appendix B). The Texas legend of the Woman in Blue refers to a woman in a blue cloak who visited Indians in the early 1600s and urged them to seek instruction in faith. At the same time, a nun in Spain, from an order that wore a blue cloak, mentioned to her confessor that in prayer she “visited” the Indians in the new world—in Tejas. Folklore continues her presence when it is said she is seen today along the ancient roads in Texas and visits when there was an instance of great need.

Publication History

My essay was an extension of research I had done for a presentation in 2002 for the Art & Soul conference, Religion and Literature in the American Southwest, sponsored by the Institute of Faith and Learning at Baylor University. In that piece, "Early Texas and a Woman of Prayer: A Mystery Then and Now." I briefly related the legend but explored the aspect of prayer in the story. (I regret this paper was destroyed when the computer I was using crashed, for a comparison between the two papers would add to this discussion.)The tradition of the tale within folklore effectively discounted the reality of the main character in the legend, Marie de Agreda, and centered on the nameless ghost who haunted Texas. In 2011, I decided to rework the material emphasizing what could be discovered about her and submitted a proposal to present it at the 2012 Texas Folklore Society meeting in Midland, Texas. It was accepted and, in January 2013, TFS asked permission to include it in its 2013 publication.

Historical Background

The legend is an integral part of the history of the state. Texas history is deemed an essential subject for all Texas residents and is required for students in eighth grade, so most people are familiar with the tale. As a newcomer to Texas, I was fascinated with the idea of bilocation, but my interest was piqued with the historical aspect of the story, for the tale was investigated by church fathers and their investigations are noted in early historical accounts such as *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936*. Based on historical records, it is known that in 1629, Indians came to mission fathers in Texas requesting baptism and

teaching. Father Alonso de Benevides, the Custudio for the New Mexican area, interviewed the Indians and reported in his *Memorials* in 1630:

Before they went, we asked the Indians to tell us the reasons why they were with so much concern petitioning us for baptism and for religious [sic] to go and indoctrinate them. They replied that a woman like that one whom we had there painted—which was a picture of the Mother Luisa de Carrion—used to preach to each one of them in their own tongue, telling them that they should come to summon the Fathers to instruct and baptize them, and that they should not be slothful about it. And that the woman who preached to them was dressed precisely like her who was painted there; but that the face was not like that one, but that she, their visitant, was young and beautiful. (Benevides qtd. in Abernathy 10)

The fathers visited the Indians and were astonished at their understanding of religious matters. When his superiors read Father Benevides' report of growth in the New World, he was summoned to Spain in 1631 and interviewed Marie de Agreda, a young nun from an order which wore a blue cloak and who had mentioned to her confessor that she had visited Indians in the New World while in a state of prayer in Spain. Benavides noted that she seemed familiar with Indian sign language and could describe some of the people in the New World. She would undergo two visits from the Inquisition and eventually renounce the truth of a paper she had signed with Benavides. She would also author various books in her lifetime.

Observations on Writing

The process of writing “Beyond Texas Folklore: The Woman in Blue,” was similar to the DuBois narrative. I take a bit of lore, ask questions, consult scholarly sources, and make connections. It sounds simple in hindsight, but the decisions a writer makes are never simple.

I was attracted, at first, to the sensational in the folktale of the mysterious woman who roamed Texas in the 1600s and talked to Indians...while never leaving her village in Spain. The woman remained a bizarre folk character in early Texas lore for me until I learned that this 17th century woman wrote books that were housed in 21st century libraries. When I visited the library at St Thomas University in Houston, Texas, and saw the hide-bound volumes on the shelf, the Woman in Blue moved beyond a ghostly figure stuck in lore to a writer of some stature with a name—Marie de Agreda. I mentally translated the volumes of printed text into long-hand writing and marveled at her perseverance as a writer. I was not interested in the religious aspect of her writing; I was fascinated by the amount she wrote. I became curious and asked, “Who was this woman?” From that question, my purpose developed: to present this folklore character as an influential woman of her times who had the ear of the king and who was a writer.

My research centered on her as a person and as a writer. I did not have the plethora of questions about the times and people that drove the DuBois essay. Instead, I gathered information about Marie de Agreda from scholarly sources and from her own writing. As I thought about writing my research, decisions about religion and audience were necessary.

I made a decision at the beginning of the research to ignore accounts of bilocation and levitation. Folklore had centered upon those details; I moved beyond them, which echoed the thought in my title. I was concerned about how to present the woman. I wanted to respect her vocation—to give a sense of the depth of devotion in her life, yet I did not want to address religion or focus on things of a religious nature, a challenge when writing about a nun. As a result, I took one influential detail in her life to illustrate the whole: her profound sense of prayer. Even though she claims to visit Indians while in a state of prayer, I ignore that. I use a quote to add depth and emphasis. For instance, she commented when she was so ill at age thirteen that she became healed when she accepted the pain. She added, “Ever since, I found that when I focused my attention within, I would enter a state of exceedingly quiet prayer” (315). Prayer would always be foremost in her life and that one statement honored throughout her life addressed her sense of devotion.

Audience considerations were foremost. I presented this paper at the Texas Folklore Society’s meeting in Midland, Texas in 2012, where it is customary to read one’s paper which is then housed in the TFS archives. It is difficult to create an engaged audience while reading a paper. The consideration of an oral/aural presentation for a Texas audience influenced decisions concerning structure and content; my background as a Toastmaster and storyteller informed the decisions.

My audience for the oral presentation and the subsequent printed text in *Cowboys, Cops, Killers, and Ghosts: Legends and Lore in Texas* were members

of the Texas Folklore Society. TFS includes people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, occupations, and ages; an eclectic group with broad interests centered in all aspects of Texas. I knew I had to engage my listener quickly and combat preconceived notions based on the folktale. I used the first sentence to connect with the audience's understanding: "Many strange tales lurk in legends and folklore of the southwest. One of the strangest is one of the earliest." The assonance of "strange tales" allowed me to orally stretch the sound and emphasize that content, and "lurk" is an abrupt sound linked with the alliteration of the "l" sound to "legends" and "folklore" (313).

The sentence also expressed my sense of life— legends lurk everywhere waiting to be discovered—in geographical features of the land, in places and regions, in people and customs. In that first sentence I connect not only with the audience but also with my own sense of story. Connecting to my own passions and interests lends a fire and enthusiasm to my voice that seeps into my speaking or my writing. When I speak or write from that which genuinely touches my life, from my own world of story, then I am accessing my world of sound, image, memory, people, place, smells, nuances, lilting language, the feel or the smell of the wind in a particular place at a particular time, wise sayings, individual narratives, place histories, rhythms of words and music—all echoing bits and pieces into my work.

In the essay, I apply a two-sentence collapse of the Woman in Blue story to refresh audience memories and note folklore focused on the "truth" or lack thereof of the tale, but I was moving beyond that argument. I whet the audience's

appetite when I reveal Marie de Agreda's influence in Europe where her works divided people into two camps—the Agredists or the non-Agredists; where, in 1995, Spain's radio Television Espanola (RTVE) pronounced her as one of nine "most influential women in Spanish history"; and where, today, she is the subject of scholarly studies with her work in print in eight or more languages (Curtis 313-314). Citing scholarly sources and acclamation from a different part of the world prepared the audience to listen while being drawn into the question—who was this woman?

I organized the material with an aural audience in mind. I followed a logical development of her life so an aural audience could stay with me. I also used terminology familiar to the audience, added imagination to facts, applied short sentences as topic sentences to announce a change of topic, and focused on what I thought would interest the audience—her letters to the king. A development of those strategies follows. These strategies would be useful to most students but especially to those in a composition course with an oral component.

The organization is divided into three parts: her early life, her character as a woman, and her character gleaned from some of her writing. I list the timeline facts but the "strange" of the opening sentence continues by framing this section with the word "unusual": She is confirmed at age four when most children were confirmed at eight years old, and she is confirmed by the king's confessor; She has little formal schooling but reads widely, converses knowledgably on topics like geography and cosmology, and reads Latin well enough to offer critiques of

translations. In addition, she writes a book when she is fifteen years old and is given a Papal Bull to be abbess in her twenties when most women appointed to that position are at least twenty years older. I selected these details to emphasize her differentness was life-long; it had to do with who she was.

In addition, I couch these differences in today's language with analogy. It is difficult for an audience, aural or textual, to imagine 17th century life. Translating actions into today's terminology by likening her to a gifted child became an effective strategy. Most audiences today understand that term, and it lessened the mystical aspects that surrounded her. I also applied today's terminology to imaginatively translate aspects of her job. I have little understanding of the work of an abbess, but I surmised that it took management qualities to manage a convent effectively. As a result, the convent became an organization and the abbess a CEO. With the translation of terms and the move away from religious terminology, Marie de Agreda became an administrator who managed an organization, conducted a building program to produce a new building with running water, and established an endowment in her first five years of being appointed abbess— while in her late twenties to early thirties with no previous executive experience. Putting her early life in these terms portrayed a practical woman with an understanding of organizational growth and funding (317-318). Presenting the evidence framed by the analogy of a “gifted child,” with actions in today's terminology, left the audience free to mentally compare the folklore and draw their own conclusions (316).

However, to get to the above point, I looked at facts differently. Facts are dry. Facts about her life can be listed. As I gathered my research, I reimagined it—taking the facts for a stroll and walking among them. I noticed questions based on my being in that created world: what was the climate, the place, the region like? How did it smell? What did I see, sense? Evidence can be overwhelming. Creating a *telling space* and stepping imaginatively into it can add a different understanding. I did not attribute anything to her that I could not verify; however, I did use my imagination to create connections among facts or fill the gaps.

Facts can be fired unendingly like a machine gun, but facts can be blanks—without meaning. My topic sentences in the latter half of the paper summarized the material in the paragraph by inference. “She became a competent administrator” or “She was a reluctant authoress” announce my point to the audience and then the paragraph presents evidence to support my observation. The simplicity of those topic sentences, voiced with a slight pause at the end, gives an aural audience time to mentally adjust to a new point and hear the information as supporting that statement. The evidence in the paragraph adds to the narrative of who she is, so the audience can see the instances in their mind. For instance, in the section on learning from experience, I find Agreda seemed candid. When teaching her nuns she states that hair shirts and the like were more apt to influence temper than holiness, and, later in life she shares the torments of her sexual thoughts. I chose these details because they gave me pause—what would a hair shirt feel like, look like, and how is it made?— and I

have learned to trust that what catches my interest might be of interest to someone else. Sometimes details can be presented without comment. For instance, I reveal that one of her jobs as abbess was to clean the communal privy. I do not need to pontificate on humility—an aural or textual audience can make their own comparisons and supply their own conclusions. I present Agreda as a young woman who manages an organization, deals with publicity, and extends her help and influence to the people around her. However, she is a writer, and it is through her letters to King Phillip IV that her practical wisdom shines through. Any person who could do the amount of writing she did and maintain a correspondence with a ruling authority of a country was not flighty, a person without substance, as the folktale portrayed her.

Marie de Agreda's Letters

I had a choice when presenting her credentials as a writer. I could name her books and review their contents to give the audience a sense of her topics and the range of her thought. However, I was not particularly interested in the books—17th century religious writing—nor did I think my audience would be engaged with the material. I note her major work, *The City of God*, was translated into eight languages, published in more than eighty editions, could be purchased on Amazon, and then move to her correspondence with King Phillip IV. After a visit one day to the convent, he corresponded with Agreda for more than twenty years, and more than 600 letters exist today.

Through her letters, I illustrate the range of this woman's thoughts to my 21st century audience. I did not use many references—time constraints honed my

choices nor did I want to lose my audience with too many details—a few sufficed to portray my point. The pressure of constraints comes from learning to speak within stringent time limits, such as giving a five-to-seven minute speech at a Toastmasters' meeting or telling a story within ten minutes.

In her letters, Agreda reveals a practical knowledge of people, writes with authority, and dispenses advice on a range of matters. On money and soldiers:

Another thing, so many changes in coinage are extremely harmful.

A man's savings are the reward of his toil and he preserves them jealously; if the value is depreciated, naturally he becomes angry.

Your majesty has many wise and disinterested people who will give you information about this and tell you what I am saying is

true. (321)

She comments on military matters. For instance, she warns the king not to believe rumors of the French attacking Flanders and suggests instead that he consider strengthening Catalonia, while reminding him of the strategy of misdirection in warfare. Again, she astutely commiserates with the king on the lack of recruits and subtly suggests he involve the nobility to insure the key matter—that the men get money: “I am sorry so few come to Your majesty's aid; for the grandees could take an active interest in the army, hearten your soldiers, bring them promptly to the colors, and make the men feel sure they will get their pay” (321). Her words still ring, through the centuries, with a practical wisdom and a balanced boldness of a writer, aware of her audience—a king.

Other letters portray her sense of writing. She wrote to her advisor in 1660: "I have handed over the manuscript to the Father Guardian with reluctance because I was sure that additions and deletions would be made. They have put questions to me in writing, and it is easy to make a mistake"; she later asks for a "list of the faults with their paragraph numbers; because now I have the task of reading through and revising my manuscript, and your corrections will come when they are very welcome indeed" (322). This is a woman who went through two sessions of the Spanish Inquisition and, after one session, renounced the document she signed with Benavides about her visitations to the New World. She is aware of words and the authority of documents. Her comments reveal a writer's awareness that documents are shaped, words can be misunderstood, and numbering paragraphs insures a precise reference. Her words give a glimpse of a mindset that invites collaboration, feedback, and revision.

Reflection

I find myself functioning on various levels with this reflection. When I wrote the essay, I thought I was responding to a CFP to a conference near my family. I was interested in the topic from a folklore point of view and simply asked a question about the woman. But with reflection, I have to recognize the draw of writing in this woman's life. Would I have been as interested in her if she never wrote anything? That she worked with words and documents suggested hard work and not an ethereal presence; touching the books made her real as a person. Mentally I framed my research with the weight I gave her as a writer . . . which may have created a bias.

I also noted it strange that both essays were about 17th century women—why? The century did not interest me, but the women as people did. Something in me identified with them—I wanted to know what made them tick. That sense of curiosity kept me to my task of research, but it was more than curiosity. Self-interest also influenced. What could be learned from their lives?

I find it is not enough to contemplate reflection—I force myself to write it out, and somehow the physical act of writing yields insight. Somehow, letting the river of words saturate the paper reveals thoughts—no—not quite. The image comes to mind of the old pump and the well of water. The physical act of writing acknowledges a time set apart with an express purpose of listening within to the images, senses, and impressions—similar to the *telling space*—but in this instance hearing and trusting the impressions which can often be quick-silver instances of light that need to be translated. If this experience was limited to writing, I think it would be difficult to engage students in the exercise. However, with expanded opportunities for creativity in various forms of media, I think students would identify with the concept of the importance of becoming acquainted with their “other self,” as Murray would put it.

**Moving Forward by Degrees: Learning to Cope with Change, Challenge,
and Chaos**

Publication History

I wrote “Moving Forward by Degrees: Learning to Cope with Change, Challenge, and Chaos” (See Appendix C) in answer to a CFP on the University of Pennsylvania English Department’s website in 2011. The focus was success

in college—“what must be balanced ...sacrificed ... overcome”; abstracts were invited for the collection, *Because My Story Matters: Struggle and Success on Higher Education’s Frontlines*, edited by Jennifer Bernadzikowski and Susan Levy of Cecil College (“Edited”). I was drawn to the title of the collection—I felt deeply that stories matter, especially for students as a means of passing on knowledge.

When I read the CFP requesting stories from students in higher education, I was attracted to the editors’ understanding of the personal story as an agent for change. Levy and Bernadzikowski argue the power of stories to effect institutional change and policies in higher education and called for the need to listen to “the voices of the real people on the frontlines. . . before we institutionalize definitions and policies” (“Edited”). They sought “narratives and interviews that tell the experiences of students—those who achieve despite great obstacles, those who challenge traditional notions of success by forging their own paths, those who struggle to keep one foot in the door, those who don’t manage to do so” (“Edited”).

I thought back over the years since 1997 when I returned to college to finish a degree—it was not so much that I had a story to tell but that I had learned much that might benefit others. The CFP became a forum to share knowledge. I looked forward to sharing my experiences and, although telling the story of college seemed simple, my emotions clogged. Writing this became a major fight with myself to send the material in, even though it was a short piece of about 1,500 words. I now better understand that inner battle and the importance of addressing feelings. Murray makes it a priority because “[w]riters’ feelings control

the environment in which the mind functions” (“Teaching” 145). The title reflects the reality of writing my way through college: change, challenge, and chaos.

My submission was accepted and a proposal for the book was ready in March 2012. That proposal was submitted by the editors with sample chapters and some “essays ... that best represent the substance, range, and tone of the project as a whole”; my essay was one included in the proposal. At present, the book is being considered by the University of Chicago Press under a different title.

Observations on Writing

The questions on the CFP guided my material. They addressed motivation; decisions to stay in college or to leave; changing definitions of success for an individual and for an institution, commitment; and cost in terms of money, time, and stamina. I created a document of questions loosely based on the CFP and applied a stream-of-consciousness approach, writing what came to mind. This freewriting established some memories and points I could develop.

- What did I have to sacrifice? (preconceived notions of the divisions of labor at home)
- What kept me going? (remarks on my papers, chance to rewrite my story)
- What was hard? (technology; isolation; old failures; age)
- What helped me? (past life created endurance, habit of reading encouraging authors, stories of family and faith)

I did not use all the material, but it served to clump memories and begin the process of thinking. The questions on the CFP stimulated my thoughts.

I have three copies of the essay: the original submission, a requested revision, and a final revision to cut words for the publisher. The work was edited from 1,931 words to 1500 words. The first original paragraph introduced me as a non-traditional student and previewed my direction:

It's not a story of jumping through academic hoops but one, rather, of facing past and present failures and learning to cope with change to meet the constant challenge to move into and stay in places where failure was a constant possibility, where learning encompassed extending grace to oneself, where success became redefined. (325)

Each paragraph then dealt with a topic important in my experience: mistakes of the past with two brief examples; motivation and vision from guest speaker at church; doubts about returning to a community college; transitions; fulfilling coursework; challenging coursework; story section relating an incident that changed my life in college; reflection; effect of stories on my journey; redefinition of success with examples; and closure.

The experience of working with editors was new to me; one that helped me as a writer. The email requesting revision noted the section where the essay would be placed was one concerning motivation: "You might think of this chapter as 'Why Me, Why Now?'" The first revision included seven suggestions ranging from moving material, questioning why I felt that "writing was the one thing I could call my own," deleting an outside reference and replacing it with a specific example; and deleting some family history unless I could work in a specific

instance where I drew upon family story (Bernadzikowski and Levy; see Appendix D; 334). I had mentioned a variety of stories that influenced me such as Jack tales, stories of faith, and family narratives.

The editors' suggestions created a more personal piece of writing. For instance, they suggested I take a line describing my experiencing returning to school, shift it to open the narrative, and collapse the beginning paragraphs. They explained why: "We loved the backpack line and think it has the strength to carry the opening. Doing so would show a clear picture of you from the outset and relieve you of going through all of the reflection that now appears at the beginning" (Bernadzikowski and Levy, "Because"). The original opening sentence, "I returned to college in 1997 to finish a degree begun twenty years before and to connect an interest in writing with a paycheck" now became "I started school with the backpack my grandson used in kindergarten and probably felt as terrified as he did on his first day of school" (333). Although I am using "I" in the original sentence, there's a sense of an observer relating from a distance. The revision gave a sense of immediacy and image. I would not have labeled my early paragraphs "reflection," but the resulting rewrite revealed the personal and distinguished the reflection.

The request for an additional word cut came a few weeks ago (See Appendix E). That deletion hurt. I worked over those words—they represented new knowledge to me, an understanding that had emerged through writing and remembering. It seemed that the material deleted were the connections I make that a reader could make. For instance, I state,

I had started school still in my role as an older woman from a suburban neighborhood. I hadn't accepted my role as a student—equal with all students. I left that classroom with a different perspective. The guys at the back of the room helped me make the transition to 'student.' (336)

The middle two sentences were deleted which created a stronger sequence. In addition, the section extolling writing was deleted except for one sentence, "writing satisfied something deep within me." The final section was deleted included my observations about stories and success. I grieved the lack of the sentence, "Success cannot be defined only in terms of completing a degree. Success is incomplete without the degree to which people have been changed" (337). However, I saw the honed document was less dense and had a sharper focus, less the voice of the academic observer pouring knowledge into recipients' ears and eyes a la Freire, more the personal experience speaking in stronger, more interesting writing, letting readers make their own connections.

The final product briefly includes my background, the impact of a guest speaker at church, my doubts, transitions, coursework that delighted, coursework where I struggled, the story that related a major shift for me, my identification with family stories of struggle, and a quote from Ken Bain, "the best teachers assume that learning has little meaning unless it produces a sustained and substantial influence on the way people think, act, and feel" (17). I was interested that the quote from Bain was not incorporated into the body of the essay but, because of the deletions, became tagged on like a moral in a fable. The final product seems

foreign to me. It's my story, my words, my phrasing—but it is different. There is a sense of *mine* but the absence of reflection gutted an important part of the work for me. However, I know I will use the writing at another time. The editors cut the clothing of reflection to highlight the bones of the narrative, and the process and result will serve as a model for me.

Reflection

I included reflection above because it was appropriate and supported what I was discussing. However, time has passed since I wrote this section, and two observations need to be voiced. At first glance, I agreed on the revision of the opening. I assumed the editors thought it made a tighter narrative, would appeal to the audience, and reflect the purpose of the book. My practical do-whatever-to-get-the-grade persona was operating as was my scholarly training in objectivity, which I have only begun to understand as a literal divorce from my personal self. The revision does not quite portray my inner excitement at the opportunity to go to school, but it does free readers to make their own connections.

It takes time to let insights bubble up. I am coming to understand that I operate with different personas as part of who I am. There is the practical, do-whatever-it-takes mode as mom to my family or as an instructor balancing teaching, taking courses, and maintaining an active family life. I make executive decisions influenced by time and project boundaries. As a writer, my practical persona persists, and I experience a trade off with my newly emerging creative self.

I am also coming to understand a very real need for what I think of as *Resonance*—not journaling or reflection taught as an element of writing, for our students might lump that into a negative attitude toward writing or composition. I am still trying to understand what I mean with the term, but I think of *resonance* as a life skill—as a space for paying attention—for listening, sensing, hearing—not as a creative act leading to a product but as paying attention to the person within.

Small Works

I mentioned above that I had to fight myself to write the personal essay—but that has been the story of any writing involved with this dissertation. The three essays and many shorter works were a product of despair. For a few years, I felt incapable of writing anything worthwhile. I felt blank—frozen—numb. I questioned my sanity at entering a degree program at this level; I stared at a blank page and wondered what I had to say; I collected more and more information surrounding myself with stacks of printed articles, as the printed page was easier to read than a computer screen. I felt overwhelmed, floundering in a morass of paper. I was not meeting my deadlines. When I did write, it seemed stilted—laden with references in the research-rich dissertation. Old misogynistic ghosts haunted and taunted.

I almost dropped out, but I knew myself to be a responsible woman—one who delighted in writing papers for all university coursework; one who thrived on the writing required for two master degrees. I reread old assignment papers and confirmed to myself that I was capable of good writing, but the thought of having

to be “an expert” terrorized. Working with small bits of writing and responding to CFPs became a strategy to confront the freeze of doubt and fear.

I did not intentionally use writing to prime the pump of writing. That analogy and the understanding of what I did came with reflection and the dormant memory of our old kitchen pump. I could pump the handle all I wanted with no results even though it led to a deep well of water. To bring up the water, small bits of water had to be poured over the plunger attached to the pump handle. This action expanded the dry leather band around the plunger which then could create enough suction so water could be drawn up into the pump. I trusted that the well for writing was there.

Short writings became a strategy for writing the entire dissertation. The short works satisfied my need to see growth, accomplishment, and closure—quickly. They allowed me to engage in different mental activities other than the enormity of writing hundreds of pages, to pay attention to me rather than to an assignment, and to sense control and triumph over blank spaces whether on a white page or in my life. Short works gave me space to remember and to honor people, places, and values outside of academia and to stamp my identity and values on institutional demands. I felt as though a force within me was bursting boundaries. I chose to trust my inner wisdom that I was not irresponsible about writing, but, rather, experiencing a vital aspect of it.

The first time I used short writings was an instance when I was deeply stuck in writing the dissertation, taking a morning to write a few sentences. The dissertation became a blank—a dark blank laden with despair. I thought of two

people in their seventies and wanted to tell their story. I felt impelled to do so. I gave myself permission to turn aside—for short instances—to write a line, to contemplate the frivolous, to listen and hear and remember. Writing brought their voices to me, their laughter, their words. I could write that short work because I did not have a formal audience—because I could view it as an exercise—something subject to tweaking. That attitude freed it from the claws of my combative, critical inner-editor which even now threatens to make it “right.” I had taught students in FYC to physically tell the voice of their inner editor to “shut up—you’ll have your turn when I edit.” How is it that I could complete years of college with the understanding of just doing whatever is necessary—write the assignments, usually to please the instructor, to get the grade, to pass the course, to move through the system? It reads like the folktale, “The House that Jack Built.” How could I have trusted that the system was teaching me as a writer? How could I have passed it on blindly to my students? How can it be that it has taken the lengthy process of writing a dissertation to claim the space and place for this “other” as necessary to writing larger works—as essential to recognizing and developing the creative composer/writer within? Small works were personal bits expressing a thought—not a finished piece. Prose can lose story in wordiness. This was the exercise that acknowledged two people.

[T]here

They came to me there in the writing center—
one to write an article,
the other to acknowledge a sixty-year-old debt.

The quilter, proud of her heritage
and sixty years of quilting, said,
“I think *I can*. . . write as good as *any of them*,”
pointing to the quilting magazine.

So, we met once a week and talked of what one thing she wanted
to focus on, as she shared her memories, patterns,
and stories. She had lived in that university town all her life,
but had never set foot on university ground—
until her need to write pressed her
beyond her boundaries.

The other called the center for help—
his memoirs to right the Indian who saved his life—to pay a debt,
to write the wrong of sixty years of silence.
His bass voice drawled apologetically,
“Indians didn’t count for much back then.”
Then, a rising shriek and quick return.
“Pardon me, Ma’am, I’m no harm.
Been that way since the war.
Lied about my age to join. Got a few weeks of boot camp,
shipped out. T’was ’44—near the end of the war,
but sometimes . . . I’m back there.”

Centered within the university, we declined
to help, but I met him at the bookstore
with the polished eight-foot oak doors, the sound of Vivaldi, and the aroma
of new books and strong coffee.

His wife called him an old fool and left.

I listened, seeking a way through entangled,
shell-shocked memories.

And I was still seeking
a way to tell their story,
a way to pay tribute.

Anchoring their courage to cross boundaries in narrative word play
satisfied something in me. On the surface, I captured thoughts, told a story,
created closure, and stayed writing my dissertation. It took time to understand
that, on another level, I identified with their struggles to learn to write and that
writing about them acknowledged and eased something in me. Small works
served to prime my pump for writing. Would the same hold true for students?
Could short works such as poems, small stories, sketches, jokes, one-liner
descriptions, and one-page reflections stimulate creativity, combat resistance to
assignments, and bring fun and play to the composing process? What if we gave
students a broader vision of composition? What if we acknowledged the
composer within and gave space for play? A folder of bits and pieces might serve
to prime the pump and to create an *archive* of ideas and works as a way of

recognizing and managing creative knowledge. It would be available when needed with content to spark ideas or to become a project, subject to the more formal development process.

Sometimes I wrote a few lines at the beginning of a blank page to claim a space, to make it friendly. It might be what I saw out the window—birds cautiously flying to the bushes before approaching the feeders. Mundane happenings like Freire’s family chickens and cats, but claiming the non-academic world I lived in as valid. Often I let myself be distracted by condensing paragraphs to essential lines, releasing wordiness.

A memory surfaces—1997
a canceled conference workshop
writing centers and composition substituted
“What is composition?” I ask.
Life-altering, six-second question

I think of these short writings as a kind of poetry which I define as *words playing together*. Poetry pins thoughts with sparse language. It became a realm I could enter for play. Academic writing loomed large with language requirements; playing with words became life-giving instances—a refreshing brain puzzle—not serious, subject to tweaking, a verbal ball batted playfully. It was as though there was a part of me that I never knew—that as one part of me performed the academic exercise of thinking and organizing and writing, this other part of me demanded that I come out and play.

The shorter writing required for CFPs afforded an opportunity to finish a work as opposed to the lengthy process of writing for the dissertation. I delighted in research, but continually fought myself to force the writing to completion. I used CFPs to combat despair and to reinforce the notion that at one time I could write lengthier papers and might do so again.

Each of the essays I wrote is about a woman; each deals with texts; each was written in the depths of despair; each would not have been possible without the vehicle of a dissertation compelling the emotional and practical need.

Application of Storytelling, Folklore, and Heritage Literacy

Reflection, the process of analyzing work as an author, added depth and insight to my understanding of writing. When writing the three essays, I concentrated on meeting the CFP requirements. Reflection revealed a variety of literacy heritages whose presence bubbled beneath the surface of the writing and influenced authorial choices.

Storytelling saturates all the works. The DuBois essay is rich with incidents of story. The story of Huguenot persecution, perseverance, and business savvy provides a setting and back story for Catherine. The different versions of the Indian attack situated within oral histories and written histories, as well as the length of accounts from Aunt Edith's four lines to websites devoted to the story, reveal the complexity of telling the tale. In addition, the captive women access the captivity narrative within the text of a psalm and apply it to their own situation through song. I used the anecdote of my elderly friend passionately relating her grandmother's Civil War memories to illustrate the strength of

historical memory and related the overall narrative of getting acquainted Catherine DuBois. Folklore has a presence with the acknowledging of “tradition,” eye witness accounts, official histories, and with the distinction between the lore attached to the Pilgrims. This essay also reveals a rich connection to various literacies such as the ability to read the historical time and act upon that information as well as the variety of textual accounts; oral accounts; and financial, economic, and work place literacies.

Storytelling continues in “Beyond Texas Folklore: The Woman in Blue.” The larger narrative reflects my quest to answer a question. Within the narrative, are two stories— the folklore version and my focused account to reveal Marie de Agreda. The further division of Marie de Agreda as a young woman, an abbess, and a writer could be considered three mini narratives. The folklore in this essay shows an enduring and general audience interest in the supernatural and entertaining narrative and contrasts with the academic material to a more limited audience.

The overall narrative of my journey in higher education, “Moving Forward by Degrees: Coping with Change, Challenge, and Chaos,” points to a few incidents that illustrate an emotion, an action, a sense. Stories within the story serve as anecdotes or as a larger narrative to illustrate a turning point in my life. In addition, I include references to stories that inspired me to move past feelings of dislocation and identity confusion such as the family story of my Portuguese grandfather carrying beer to day laborers, going to school at night to become an engineer, and hiding his cultural identity. I also refer to Jack tales I told as a

storyteller in which Jack is an ordinary person, often portrayed with a lack, who fights through obstacles to meet a need or solve a problem. Story and folklore anchor my growing literacy in higher education.

As I walked with the essay characters, participated in their worlds, and wondered about my own literacy heritages, my conception of literacy expanded. For instance, Catherine's father and her husband demonstrate an ability and willingness to read and interpret the times which included financial literacy and an ability to put together information from various sources to make sense of the world. In addition, the Huguenots had an understanding of the work involved in specific jobs and could take that knowledge wherever they went—workplace literacy. That understanding has expanded, for me, to include most jobs today. For instance, my plumber can go to the cellar and read the multimedia text of pipes for the furnace, water, and waste material. I cannot. He has a literacy that travels with him passed on through oral tradition, text, and experience from which he chooses what works for him. The Huguenots could have qualified for the NCTE's Position Statement for 21st Century Literacies: They developed cross-cultural and international connections to share information from a variety of sources for a multitude of purposes to solve problems together. I did not write the essays to showcase story, folklore, or literacy—that they are present to the extent they are is enlightening.

However, the final product of a published essay does not reveal the whole story—for the research, the revisions, and the reflection reveal so much more. The rich traditions and folklore of the 17th century-Dutch and Huguenot cultures

found in my general research are absent because they did not further my narrative. The unstated but present long memories of persecutions retold by the Huguenots was implied by the historical background of persecution and brought more to light through the reflection process. The wealth of my background knowledge of geographic place and environment, the folklore of Henry Hudson, the Indian lore of my childhood, and the family stories of place and people are also not present in the published text, but their presence influenced who I am as a writer. The deleted material for word count in "Moving Forward" included a variety of references only represented by a sentence in the final form.

Reflection revealed the extent to which storytelling influenced me as a writer; it also revealed answers to the question, where did the lilt of oral language come from? Then I remembered the *sound* of reading. Most evenings as I was growing up, my mother settled into a large armchair with my brother and with me stuffed in on either side her as she read aloud. The books were all old but with a plethora of illustrations drawing the reader into the text. But most of all, I remember the sound of her voice, for when she read, time stopped. She read as poet with expression and sound and meaning lengthening the lilt of language as she shared the storied world of the text. I lived within that storied world to the music of her voice. My literacy resounded to the rhythms of story embedded in oral language; I learned meaning and sense and imagined worlds through laughter and language, illustrations and text.

That oral literacy trickled down to my students. When I was teaching composition in Houston, I found many of my students had little understanding of

the *sound* of something read well. Sometimes I read aloud short works that drew them into story. I also selected short passages of interest from their papers and highlighted the work of five different students a week until I included all students and then repeated the process. The students were fascinated at how their work *sounded* when read well. The act of reading selective sentences or paragraphs to illustrate a variety of ideas relative to a writer in composition profoundly affirmed them before their peers through the practical illustration of their writing.

I keep in mind two instances that ground me as a teacher of writing. I remember one student whose work I read aloud. It had been difficult to find something in his essay, but all I needed was a few sentences—something that sounded powerful when read and reflected a rhetorical value. I identified the writer when I heard his comment to another student as he left class, for his voice echoed with pride as he reiterated what I had said and what he had written. The magic of orality can add such depth and illustration to text and affirm the writer.

Another illustration of the power of writing occurred when my aunt died. She had kept only her most valued possessions in the room at her assisted-living retirement community. There were three items: a tiny book of encouraging thoughts; a family portrait-photograph taken about 1910 with four generations of women: herself and two sisters as girls with their mother—Helen Atwood Davidson, and Helen's mother—Catherine Dubois, and Catherine's mother—Adeline Perrine Brink Dubois. Their lived histories and shared knowledge encompassed a century from the time Adeline's father took the family in a covered wagon to Ohio to the Civil War and into the beginning of a new

century—the 1900s. The last treasured memento was an essay my aunt had written at least sixty years before because she was well into her eighties when she died. On it is a neat, “Well Done.” Just those two words, but I wonder who the teacher was and what did those words mean that my aunt would keep the essay until she died. Writing matters.

The incidents of story, folklore, and literacies abound in the research, are chosen and cut from revisions, and noted and commented on through reflection. It is the process of reflection that has plumbed the depth and breadth of the research and revision involved in the act of writing. Reflection also creates a space and an objectivity to see oneself as a writer and, importantly, time to own that space. Reflection allows the composer/writer/storyteller to attend to the *whole story*—affirming the stories, the voids, and the silences subsumed to project and personal restrictions.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH QUESTION DISCUSSION

My research discussing aspects of *[re]storying the commons* was motivated by my experiences as a student, as a literacy educator, and as a writer. Although I have taken courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels since 1997, I was not encouraged to use the wealth of my life experience as topics for essays; the use of “I” was privileged for professors. As a literacy educator teaching college composition, I saw the frustration of my students as they stressed about finding worthy “academic” topics for their various essays.¹ And based on my work as a writer, as discussed in chapter five, I knew folklore and storytelling could connect to students’ backgrounds and to topics for writing, but I was not sure how this might be accomplished. My research questions reflect this concern. In this chapter, I turn my attention the research questions which prompted this study:

- How can life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy be applied to scholarly work in a college composition class?
- Are there instances or situations where life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy should not be applied to a college composition class?

To establish the pervasiveness of literacy heritages, I briefly note the unintended aspects of literacy heritages in my writing and then address the research questions in the following sections: Students and Educators; Place, People, and Environment; Groups, Genres, and Themes; Archives, Artifacts, and

¹Academic topics are those which are can be researched and written about objectively, have sufficient pro/con reference material available online and in the library, and are suitable for the argumentative essay/research report. Topics favored by students include abortion, gun control, and legalizing marijuana.

Publishing Opportunities. When I discuss First Year Writing, I assume a semester course similar to the one I taught which met department or WPA outcomes and usually required three-four essays of varying length and an eight-ten page research paper accompanied by a range of resources.

The main motivation for writing the essays, “Catherine DuBois: Woman of Courage and Conviction”; “Beyond Texas Folklore: The Woman in Blue”; and “Moving Forward by Degrees: Learning to Cope with Change, Challenge, and Chaos” was the opportunity to present a paper at conferences held near my former home in Texas. I could visit family while also presenting a paper. Each essay was written to meet conference themes and requirements. However, the essays and reflection reveal the unintended pervasiveness of literacy heritages.

Storytelling saturates the material. All the works have a narrative structure in the sense that I was telling a story about Catherine DuBois, Marie de Agreda, and myself. I included shorter stories illustrating various points. For instance, the story of my friend who spoke of Yankees stealing family quilts relayed the emotion of an incident that happened a hundred and fifty years ago—only a story of personal experience could have revealed the long memory of injustice. That story revealed the *immediacy* of memory; it placed me within the Civil War as experienced by a Tennessee mountain woman and related by her granddaughter. Only a story of personal experience could have relayed the *outrage* and the *reality of lived Civil War experience*. Some of the material in this chapter will show the application of oral histories as an international happening in museums and archives, made possible by technology and the desire of ordinary

people for a multifaceted history that better reflects a lived reality.

Folklore was present in the general reading about the times for both the “DuBois” and the “Agreda” essays and influenced me personally with my background choices and knowledge. Whether discussing the difference between family traditions and historical records or taking a folktale and situating it in history, my work showed the possibility of such work for others. The interests in language, texts, stories, histories, written and oral narratives, folk cultures and customs, and the quest to discover how people know what they know echoes throughout my work.

The extent of the presence of these literacy heritages surprised me because they were unintentional—their presence a part of the woman I am. Would the same be true for others? I think if a forum for discussion were provided within a welcoming environment then the conversation, memories, and stories would flow. People are not always aware of what they know. Reflection helped me to understand the prevalence of story, customs, cultural memories, and the ways of acquiring knowledge; it also showed me the need to attend to the creative self within.

Students and Educators

How can life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy be applied to scholarly work in a college composition class?

First, students are familiar with narrative, although they may not define their involvement as such. The generation of students in college today may be more attuned to communicating through storytelling than previous generations. In

“Using Storytelling to Meet the Technology and Informational Literacy Needs of Millennial Students,” Greg Stephens remarks that “60 million to 74 million millennial generation students and employees born from around 1977 to 1995 are flooding the colleges and entering the workplace with learning styles favorable to storytelling.” For instance, students already encounter story and folklore through the plethora of modern technologies—gaming narratives, social media activities, blogs, LARP, and videos, in addition to conversational storytelling, spoken-word art, films, poetry, jokes, celebrations, marketing practices, dance, paintings, photographs, books, songs, scrapbooks, comedians, performances, leaders, training simulations, counseling, groups, and organizations, to mention only some instances.

Narrative surrounds students and may include oral, aural, and visual aspects of performance and language such as that experienced in gaming, in watching and imitating someone play a musical instrument, in hearing a story told or read. Some students come from a background rich in orality. The Appalachian region of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky is especially noted for an oral heritage in story. Donald Davis, a storyteller raised in the southern Appalachian mountains and residing in North Carolina, comments that the children and adults in his family worked and lived to the “sounds of talking” as “part of the fabric of everyday living” (26). Some cultures are more oral than others. For instance, the Irish are known for their storytelling abilities as a national trait, African Americans are also known for narrative and the poetic story of rap, and working class caregivers and parents are “prodigious narrators” such that children are

“saturated” with storytelling; even children as young as two-years old “participate routinely” in storytelling, relating their experiences (Michaels 138).

In addition, some forms of visual storytelling are so common that they are not connected to narrative. Visual story surrounds us through “religious sculptures, weather vanes, signs of the zodiac...flags, chalk outlines at a murder scene,” according to Andrew Losowsky, who declares visual abstraction is common to the human condition (4). Oral story and visual representations are as ancient as recounting exploits through telling tales and prehistoric cave drawings and as current as Facebook. As Jerome Bruner suggests, story is so common as to be considered a culture’s “coin and currency” (16). Students are familiar with literacy heritages in various forms.

Students will also encounter literacy heritages in their private lives. Narratives on scholarship applications, grants, graduate school applications, insurance claims, accident reports, and narratives told in interviews with employers, police officers, custom officials, immigration agents, doctors, and welfare or social service authorities carry the weight of life changing decisions. Often, narrative is glossed over to move a class toward argument. However, an expanded understanding of narrative application is needed for first-year learners.

It is also reasonable to assume some of our students will enter employment touched by the fields of business, sociology, science, communications, technology, history, philosophy, psychology, media studies, education, jurisprudence, healthcare, politics, and theology, to mention some areas as discussed in chapter four. Additionally, students will be better able to

consider a fit with an organization if they understand an organization reveals identity, values and expectations through its narrative. Researching and writing about the application of story, folklore, or the tracking of the adaption of a specific knowledge in one's future field or occupation is a practical way to explore areas of interest. (See Table 8 for practical applications of storytelling and Table 9 for areas of folklore.)

Additionally, topics for writing and research that engage students are essential. First-year composition (FYC) is mandatory for disciplinary tracks across the curriculum and is a key for college success. Students enter FYC with diverse needs and areas and levels of preparedness. *The Council Chronicle* calls for a variety of "teaching approaches and assessments" to tighten the preparedness gap among students because "writing acts as a gatekeeper; weak writing skills limit school, job, and advancement opportunities" (Gere, "Writing"). In addition, finding topics that relate to all students can be "challenging" (Rankins-Robertson 61). Heritage literacies have the potential to engage students and connect to instances of their lived experience.

Educators may welcome the opportunity to read material that is different. A change of topics can be refreshing, especially when reading more than one hundred essays every three to four weeks. Plagiarism was a problem I encountered with more traditional essays. Some papers were so cleverly stitched together with sentences taken from one internet source after another that, while I admired the time and the skill it took to put the essay together, I was disheartened. Students needed the opportunity to grow their own sentences and

grow into academic discourse. In addition, literacy heritages may resonate with educators and prompt their own exploration in writing. Finally, literacy heritages offer an opportunity to meet the 21st century concerns raised by the Writing Programs Administrators (WPA): “identity, authorship, multiculturalism, literacy definitions, and home literacies” (Grimm, *Good xiii*). Story and folklore are common across cultures, and transmit values, identity, and knowledge as they learn informally the wisdom and literacies important to a people. Home literacies are valued as a literacy heritage. If students can create associations between their background knowledge and academic discourse, they may be less likely to think of using other people’s work instead of their own. Educators may become engaged with heritage literacies because of their unique possibilities, a personal attraction to the subject matter, or because they are a way to counter 21st century challenges. However, they may also be attracted because heritage literacies might add an element of fun to the FYC classroom.

Are there instances or situations where life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy should not be applied to a college composition class?

Students may be unaware of narrative in their lived narrative worlds and that a general category, storytelling, exists that can be applied to the disparate activities of those worlds. Stories can be related to children, and storytelling to a librarian reading a story to a group of children. Although the term “story” is common, the understanding of the breadth of its application in today’s world may not be common knowledge for first-year learners. Folklore may be perceived as without substance or as unrelated to a student’s life. In addition, students may

notice intergenerational decisions about the passing of knowledge such as noticing that a grandmother trussed a turkey but a mother did not; however, learners might not consider its possibilities as a topic of interest for an essay.

It is important that topics for research and writing resonate with the writer/researcher. That is particularly so in FYC when students are expanding their writing capabilities with projects requiring interest and attention over time. Students have a better chance of completing the writing assignment in a timely manner if they are interested in the material.

Academic writing is a new discourse for most first-year learners; however, students who are more conversant with orality may experience difficulty with writing's "non-oral and linear" form (Dunn 322-323). Cultures with a vibrant oral component are more apt to store their knowledge and wisdom in language such as proverbs, guessing games, oral poetry (Heath, "Oral" 42). The transition of language into print may also seem a devaluing of one's oral background and may be perceived as silencing a preferred means of communication (Corkery 61-62). However, oral traditions can be a resource for all students, especially as a means of learning about cultural heritages and identity (Storltje and Worthington 424).

In order for heritage literacies to reach first-year learners, teachers must include it into course material, and that may depend on an educator's specialty knowledge and bias. Instructors may hesitate to teach a course if they do not have a specialized knowledge in narrative, storytelling, folklore, literacies, or the like. For instance as explained earlier, stories were not told or modeled by instructors in Lillian Bailey's study on story use in the college classroom, and

instructors may denigrate narrative (Lei). The broad application of storytelling, in today's world, may not be comprehended or may be confined to literature sub-sections or relegated to a sub-section of folklore.

Terminology is an additional consideration. Narrative terms can be confusing with varying definitions and perspectives. Folklore is riddled with a range of definitions as are narrative studies and literacy studies. Life writing terms also range in meaning and include “biography, hagiography ... testimonio, diary, oral history, genealogy, [and] group biography” (Fuchs and Howes 1). Confusion may ensue if instructors teach from a specialty perspective which focuses on the field and its terminology. In addition, storytelling and life writing may not be as simple as they sound. Sidonie Smith notes that aspects of life writing have moved beyond the simple to the complex, and Gian Pagnucci and Nick Mauriello suggest narrative's complexity is beyond traditional areas of research and calls for an “academic heteroglossia” of cross-disciplinary voices to address the new knowledge that will be generated (“Re-Mapping” 8). However, the complexity alluded to here need not be present in the first-year composition course but enjoyed in upper-level coursework or graduate work.

In the first-year writing course, terminology and specialty knowledge are not the focus—learning to write in acceptable academic ways is the central task; heritage literacies are a vehicle to transport insider knowledge and research into academic assignments, including argumentation. As a literacy educator, storyteller, and writer, I limit information and focus on engaging students in

research and writing. Personally, I would not emphasize terminology lest students think they might be tested on it.

Heritage literacies as aspects of life writing can suffer from the academic history of negative arguments surrounding personal writing. Old mindsets are slow to change. New terminology may help—narrative, life writing, living legacies, and heritage literacies may not face the same emotional rejection from colleagues. In addition, difficulties may arise from writing the personal. As noted previously, Jane E. Hindman handled, as an editor, personal essays submitted *by professionals in the field* to a special issue of *College English*; she states many lacked the organization of a thesis statement, “relevance,” and were “wordy, unfocused, mundane” (10). However, narrative writing and research need not reflect the issues noted above. Candace Spigelman examines different aspects of academic writing and the personal in *Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*. It is not the purpose of this study to compare the various aspects of writing the personal as argument, but my own experience, as highlighted in chapter five, indicates that it is possible to do so.

The oral/aural aspects of storytelling, narrative, and folklore have not always been deemed academically acceptable and traces of that attitude may be passed on. For instance, historians question the veracity of folklore based on the elusiveness of orality, especially when passed through the centuries, and folklore is notorious for its lack of a departmental home (Wilson 456-457). Some educators may reject a departmentally-excluded field such as folklore, which

some perceive as trite and “juvenile,” and its collection not valued (Bond 7; Kliewer 27). However, Patrick B. Mullen, a folklorist in the English Department at the University of Texas, notes that the department includes “literature, folklore, linguistics, rhetoric and composition,” but the department at Ohio State University incorporates all aspects of a large English department (50-51). In addition, educators are just now beginning to trust narratives from colleagues; trusting student narratives may be another matter (Robillard 75). Negative perceptions have long histories; teachers have to be on board in order for literacy heritages to be taught to first-year students.

Place, People, and Environment

How can life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy be applied to scholarly work in a college composition class?

Our lived places teem with memory and story. Geographic markers of place connect to powerful emotions of lived experience, place histories, stories, and legends. In this section, I expand on notions of home and consider some practical applications that incorporate heritage literacies for first-year learners.

The concept of “home” is powerful and extends beyond a physical structure, location, or group of people. James Cahalan notes that students are less resistant when writing about home and advocates a “home-town pedagogy that draws students powerfully into what they learn and how they learn it” (250): a literacy informed by regionalism, ecocriticism, and place studies (249-253). That concept of literacy acknowledges the ways of knowing in our students’ lives and can extend beyond the limits of language literacy. For instance, Henry Glassie

spoke of an atmosphere connected to a place where Turkish potters were located: “[T]hey do not speak of passing things along, but of breathing in the air. You live in a cultural environment, and the air you breathe circulates through you to emerge in actions that are yours alone but can be called traditional because you created them out of the general experience of life in some place” (qtd. in Hunt 54). That cultural environment as well as the physical attributes of place and region—waterways transporting goods and people; coal-filled ridges; earth conducive for making pottery or glass or for growing rice—influence the development of local occupations. Occupational literacy legacies within one’s family, community, culture, and region are just one way of developing a topic.

Home and place offer a wealth of material for research and writing. Lynn Youngblood, secretary to the board of directors of the National Association for Interpretation, writes that Native Americans were mindful to create a “sacred space” when they moved and before their lodges were put together so that this set-apart space recognized their identity. She adds, “A place is not just where you are, but also that feeling of belonging, of being grounded where you are” (8). This concept of home and the concept of a “sacred space” created to make the transition to preserve identity have possibilities for students. For instance, I had never considered this idea—then, I remembered moving. My mother buttered the cat’s paws, took us to the local library, and told stories. Our identity was rooted by the library and by the generational stories; we became moveable because our identity was more than place. That heritage continued as I moved with my children from Vermont to Texas. I grounded my kids’ identity in the sacred space

of the library, buttered the cat's paws so it and my kids could understand the need of finding one's way home, and told stories of generational change so they understood transition's cost. Students can write about place and home in academic ways that require language and research and also connect to the stories of place and home that are important to them.

Storyteller Dovie Thomason adds another dimension to the concept of "home." In a visit to Ireland, she notes a connection to her own home:

[T]here is a familiar relationship to place and naming that speaks of an ancient relationship with the land that is cherished and protected even more for surviving centuries of conflict. Whether it was... the hill where Patrick herded sheep, or yet another grave of Oisín, the people, the stories, the land were one tightly plaited braid of shared identity. The distant land immediately reminded me of home. (28)

The act of naming encompasses what and why and who and how and when, in addition to considerations of tradition, culture, and language—all of which are major components of our identities.

The first-year writing course could serve the department as a place to encourage future departmental connections. For instance, the first-year composition course could offer opportunities to explore place names for students with a linguistic interest or write a heritage literacy essay with a human-interest journalism focus. Small works could connect to creative writing. I am reminded of Leslie Marmon Silko and the way she applies poetry to connect history, orality, and story. In the space of a few lines, Silko's readers meet Aunt Suzy and come

to understand the anguish of the break in the traditional passing of knowledge and identity because the tribe's children were forcibly removed. Aunt Suzy was

The last generation here at Laguna,

That passed down an entire culture

By word of mouth

An entire history

An entire vision of the world

Which depended upon memory and telling in subsequent generations.

Silko adds,

And it is together—

All of us remembering together what we have heard together—

That creates the whole story

The long story of a people. (6-7)

First-year composition studies can offer creative opportunities to write about the storytelling and folklore in students' lives while engaging future departmental growth.

Composition educators have worked with their students to explore neighborhoods. Derek Owens' students researched the people in neighborhoods and the history behind the neighborhood. The products from his students' research varied and included photo essays of Asian women working in a sweatshop made from a converted garage, accounts of communities run by ethnic teens running drugs, pictures and stories of architecture in a particular place, and a video of Greek men remembering the past while getting a haircut

(“Curriculum” 125). In addition, Deborah Mutnick developed a project in which students researched and analyzed a school building as a “social narrative” portraying the neighborhood’s waves of immigrant people over a one hundred year span. Students collected local histories, provided a community space for residents to orally share their stories, and considered the “global realities that contribute as much or more than physical spaces to the city’s sense of coherence, balance, and livability” (“Inscribing” 630). Exploring the local history of a place, a building, or a people such as the Huguenot presence in the 17th century in upstate New York are viable topics for first-year composition learners.

The collection of life experiences of people in a community, in particular the life experiences of “elders,” can serve to anchor memories and histories and afford opportunities for learners to include heritage literacies. The University of Houston-Clear Lake invites students from regional community colleges to write an essay about an “elder” who has had a particular influence on the student’s life. These essays with photographs are then displayed prominently at the university. The essays illustrate the numerous ethnic cultures within the Houston area, the rich resources of influences, and, especially, the respect within a culture for ethnic intergenerational wisdom. Those faces and experiences are welcomed in the academic space of the university.

Technology makes the collection of life histories more feasible for student projects. Museums are collecting images and memories of particular towns, as noted in the next section. Phones are equipped to record visually and orally so anyone can stop time and note what is important to that individual. One hundred

years ago, J. Frank Dobie collected the stories of ordinary people and anchored, in print, the lore of people, cultures, animals, plants, and the land. He was way ahead of his times with his respect for life and desire to “dignify with significance” ordinary things (Dobie 16).

Students might concentrate on researching a single life with a historical perspective, as I did with Catherine DuBois and Marie de Agreda. Story is essential to the historical perspective according to Richard Marius, former director of the Expository Writing Program at Harvard. He writes, “we know history only by the stories that are told about it, stories that are told by many people, supported by many different kinds of evidence, told in different ways at different times and in different places” (29). I placed each woman I wrote about in her historical times as a means of building identity and values. In addition, keeping in mind my rhetorical and historical understanding of persuasion, I constantly questioned who was writing the material I read, for what audience and purpose. D. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin make a distinction that might serve students well: “Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (“Stories” 2). The term, “narrative researchers,” may resonate with students and be more manageable than the responsibilities implied with the term “writer.”

Are there instances or situations where life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy should not be applied to a college composition class?

The thought of home may be an anathema for some. Students may desire

to disassociate themselves from the past or take a vacation from home or family values. College is a time of exploration, and students may not want to be reminded of anything connected to home. Assignments requiring research into the past may be considered intrusive into one's personal space. Privacy issues must be a consideration; however, alternative tracks for research or assignments could be available for students.

In addition, the research process for literacy heritages may require more hands-on work. Personal interviews may make demands on time and emotions. Students may prefer research on an arguable topic with its attendant plethora of published material; they may prefer to use other papers they have written.

As I mentioned in the analysis of my writing, topics should resonate with students. If students are curious or otherwise engaged with the material they are researching and writing about, they are more likely, in my experience, to stay with the course. Although this is a general observation, it applies to folklore material: collectors must believe the material they are collecting as a value (Kliwer 27).

Groups, Genres, and Themes

How can life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy be applied to scholarly work in a college composition class?

Other aspects of application include researching groups of people or genres. Identifying and analyzing groups may be of interest, according to Cynthia Savage, in "Folklore 101." She suggests examining ways a group defines itself such as association of place, actions, and language and then identifying the

beliefs and values associated with a group revealed by its “behaviors, customs, celebrations, songs, and stories” (11-13). Most students have experienced belonging to at least one group and could make a list of group criteria and analyze it. Most groups also have lore. Texans enjoy ownership of the Woman in Blue; she is part of our heritage. Delivery room nurses frequently relate to their occupants the increase of births associated with the cycle of the fullness of the moon. Each group passes its wisdom and lore through its stories, one of a group’s defining features.

Folklife offers additional areas for studying a genre such as games. Students record their memories of various games, interview others who play similar games, classify the games, research the history of the games, and analyze or comment by applying criteria such as age, gender, patterns of meaning, content, and similarities and differences (Haring and Foreman 13-19). The combination of a narrowed topic, interviews, and background research incorporated into an assignment is applicable today.

Other applications abound. Rumors and legends lend themselves to research also, especially when associated with businesses. For example, one rumor connected fried chicken with male sterility, and others revealed racial concerns. The culture of sports with its symbols, jokes, and stories can be analyzed for what they reveal (Storltje and Worthington 434). Mullen, in one personal narrative, questions how he could relate field research on Lake Erie’s commercial fishermen to relevancy for the English department. He and co-author Tim Lloyd focus on “personal narratives about work [that] create identity” and

connect to the other players affecting the scene: state game wardens, tourist promoters, and fishermen interested as a sport (52).

In addition, the concept of “sound” may appeal to students with song or spoken-word art such as performance poetry or storytelling. William Loeffler notes the dominance of sound choices as a “seismic shift” in today’s society; sound relates emotion such as people singing at a sports event and influences choices so people can match their day and mood (1).

And, finally, one folklorist compares school yearbooks as representative of time and analyzes, from that perspective, advertising, jokes, poetry, current events, customs and traditions with proms and homecoming events, technology, and autographs (Schnitz 92-113). Editorial decisions such as the arrangement of content could also be analyzed as could the content that is absent.

Food is a universal topic that can be explored in a variety of ways, especially with academic presses publishing with cross-disciplinary appeal. This genre could fit with multiple perspectives in life writing—multicultural stories of preparation and celebration, traditions and lore associated with foods, intergenerational changes connected to foodways, as well as environmental concerns and regional identity. The brochure *Food & Foodways* advertises recent foodways publications from the University Press of Mississippi. It relates connections to food and is written in enticing ways with an interesting vocabulary. It could be handed out to first-year students to give them different ideas on how others have connected their lives with food research and writing. A brief listing of some descriptions follows:

Cajun Foodways. “A study of the relationship between Cajun food and modern Cajun ethnic identity.”

Crab Lover’s Book “An indispensable handful of lore, legends, and recipes for aficionados of one of the world’s most delectable crustaceans.”

New Orleans Cuisine. “Essays on the unparalleled recognition New Orleans has achieved as the Mecca of mealtime.”

The Soul of Southern Cooking. “Recipes from an African-American cook’s hard scrapple heritage and its ritual of surviving and rejoicing in family values.”

The Hungry Cowboy. “A behind-the-scenes look at the dynamics of class, race, and economics in a suburban eatery.”

Regional studies and foodways could offer a broad platform for studying story, recipes, technical changes affecting food, local foods, environmental concerns, legends, oral histories, to mention a few. Of interest is the fact that New York University does publish a regional food reader: *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader by Region*. Topical brochures from academic presses give a sense of the breadth of a topic, provide ideas for possible avenues of research, and are examples of enticing language that, at the same time, condense content to one sentence. A brochure such as the above could be used for an assignment to analyze audience and rhetorical persuasion and exemplify fun with language with students capturing, in one sentence, their favorite food, place, tradition, etc. as a lure to attract tourists. If students took on the role of a

publisher, what rhetorical decisions would they have to make?

Themes offer another way to direct student writing projects, according to Sherry Rankins-Robertson who uses “family” as a theme to direct students’ research of capturing the “everyday life in their community, capturing people, places, and event through the rhetorical lens” (62). At the University of Hawaii-Manoa, English Composition and Library Science combine in a learning community with a folklore theme. Students explore truth in legends via snopes.com, find folklore references within literature, and begin to learn the extent that folklore daily informs life through the Internet, advertising, television, and music (Lebben and McAndrews 129-131). Learning communities link two classes from different disciplines which can be handled separately by instructors or with connections such as a culminating portfolio assignment. I could have examined my work from the perspective of theme and found a commonality of journey, of moving from place to place, of surviving difficulties, of adapting. Themes can be related to the environment such as sustainability. Owens suggests locating students within the larger concern by questioning the at-risk state of a local area and, by reason of relationship, the risk to oneself (“Teaching” 366). He expands this notion:

It is not a matter of writing about one’s neighborhood or lack thereof, but exploring all local environments the workplace, the campus, the dream house one has imprinted in one’s head, the bioregion, the watershed, the town or village one left long ago but which lingers in one’s memory. (“Teaching” 368)

When combined with Bower's definition of *the commons*, sustainability can apply equally to local crafts, intergenerational passing of knowledge, and other aspects of the commons.

Moving is an experience that can have a profound effect on people. It can also generate various themes. Immigration stories abounded in the Houston area with students from families who had come from Vietnam, Mexico, and India as well as other countries. People also emigrated from other states seeking work in the booming Texas economy. I remember especially the Michigan auto workers, used to union wages, arriving in Houston and competing with others who would work for cash under the table. My own move from a village in Vermont to inner-city Houston was so drastic that time became marked with "before" and "after."

Change has long memories and prejudices. My children were dubbed "Yankees," and the teens experienced the hatred of the Civil War from the present generation still engaged in fighting it. The Catherine DuBois essay and reflection discussed, to an extent, the enormity of change, journeys, leave takings, place, and lore of the land. Marie de Agreda travelled in another way and experienced rejection from the Catholic Church, the Spanish inquisition, and the people of Texas who turned their understanding of her experience into a folktale to comprehend its mysteries. I travelled intellectually, socially, academically, financially, and personally because I embraced educational change. All of these stories involve risk and challenge and cost and hardship—the latter sounding trite—but what other word involves privation, suffering, transition, endurance, and new beginnings? Change may involve *rejection*—aimed from oneself to anything

such as to others, to a place, to a topic or language like English—or the rejection can be directed to oneself from others. Change can involve going from the security of an “insider” to the foreignness of an “outsider. Change can also include developing *resilience*. People dealing with trauma develop resilience to heal, as discussed in chapter four. The stories common to one’s background can affect attitude. Jack stories are revelations of the endurance and the capacity for problem solving of a very ordinary person. Biblical stories foster faith. Change and obstacles are common elements of stories and can be analyzed for their effect. What stories, proverbs, and sayings influenced our students? How many believe negative sayings such as, “You can’t win for losing?” The immigration/emigration story is a common experience from which students can draw wisdom. Lived experience and place, combined with reflection, are possible ways storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacies can connect with student’s insider knowledge.

Are there instances or situations where life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy should not be applied to a college composition class?

Groups and genre research may not appeal to some students. In the instance of interviewing people in one’s family or within one’s sphere of influence, students may hesitate to ask for an interview, or interviewees may not feel comfortable. Insider/outsider status may influence perceptions; relationships may be damaged. Nora Zeale Hurston, for instance, understood that cultures may not be forthcoming with information, especially to an outsider. Because she was familiar with her culture, she could access her cultural material “without hurt,

harm, or danger” (10). But this is Hurston with maturity after four years of college not as a first-year student.

Students may not be interested in analyzing experiences and looking for themes. What is learned from experience may not be apparent at first glance. I reviewed my thinking and writing more than a year after writing the work. I am not sure if I would have had the same insights immediately after writing.

Additionally, students may not prefer to engage in the time and contemplation to explore connections in their experience and although that will appeal to some, it will not appeal to all. I do not mean to imply a lack of thinking ability or interest in thinking; however, literacy heritages research requires some ruminations—a process that may have limited appeal.

The mass of material available for research may be daunting. Sometimes a plethora of choices is not best. The material could be narrowed by the instructor applying a theme such as family or migrations or food. However, even with material narrowed by a theme, students may experience feelings of being lost in the material or overwhelmed. Although that seems to be part of the nature of writing, students may feel more comfortable with a limited impersonal topic.

Archives, Artifacts, and Publishing Opportunities

How can life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy be applied to scholarly work in a college composition class?

Archives are becoming a major resource for undergraduate research, and literacy heritages have a wealth of archives available to undergraduate students. In a discussion of the growth of cultural heritage studies, Mary Edsall Choquette,

assistant professor of the School of Library and Information Science at Catholic University of America, points to the technology that documents our culture: “digital archives, electronic records, area and interdisciplinary studies, film and video, sound recordings, maps, prints and photographs” as well as manuscripts, artifacts, and other items (3). Interest in Cultural Heritages has grown to such an extent that Choquette’s university has established the Cultural Heritage Information Management (CHIM) archives for the growing interdisciplinary demand of cultural heritage studies (2). Students’ histories and stories are worthy of academic research as Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Roman suggest in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*. They state, “researching family archives and local stories can and does lead to sustained scholarly research and contributes to new knowledge, both in and outside of academe” (3).

Archives not only store various things they also reveal what is not stored. Archives can become a place for discerning what was considered important by whom and at what time. For instance, when the Brown collection of folklore was edited in the mid-1950s to early 1960s, only one assistant editor included all the material in his assigned genre. Some material was totally ignored, “folk sermons and place-name origin stories,” and only part of the collections of games, rhymes, customs, tales, and legend were published (Bond 5).

Undergraduate use of archives is a “powerful trend in higher education,” according to the authors of *Past or Portal?: Enhancing Undergraduate Learning through Special Collections and Archives*, a collection of essays describing college projects with undergraduate’s archival research (Mitchell, Seiden, and

Taraba *ix*). In one instance, Dickinson College created an ongoing electronic resource focused on the history of women at the college. In another project, an undergraduate student worked with university personnel to document the freshman experience after noting the absence of first-year voices from university archives.

Carla Mary Rineer and Marilyn McKinley Parrish joined their archival interests, composition, and a desire for plagiarism-free research for first-year composition students and decided on a creative non-fiction approach. Their students were often the first in their families to attend college and came with a range of preparedness. Students are introduced to archival material and develop questions about items. Using photocopies of the material, students choose an item of interest, research the era and the item, and write a creative nonfiction work that incorporates the research (113-118). In addition, Elizabeth A. Chase involves FYC learners in the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at Emory University using “Fostering Historical Thinking with Digitalized Primary Sources” by Bill Tally and Lauren B. Goldenberg who suggest that primary sources help students construct meaning and engage in material. The practical application linking artifacts and archives with FYC students looks promising for writing and research.

Folklife archives abound as a quick Internet search shows. However, the American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library of Congress is a main source as is the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The AFC houses more than 4,000 collections. Some of the major collections include the following: The

September 11, 2001 Documentary Project; Save Our Sounds: America's Recorded Sound Heritage Project; The International Storytelling Collection; StoryCorps; the Veterans History Project; The Civil Rights History Project, The Occupational Folklife Project, and The Local Legacies Project which collects customs, traditions, and local arts and crafts. Many of these archives are available through the internet.

Artifacts offer another source available through archives or libraries. Working with artifacts may have consequences beyond interesting research. Although Anne Ruggles Gere worked with graduate students in an American Literature class, her findings may apply to undergraduate students. Gere questioned how Internet sources and archival material could be included in her American Literature classes. Her graduate students, many of whom were teachers, included Great Lake sailors' work songs from the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor and noted the lack of a Native American presence in a local historical society. Gere notes that the project made participants question the definitions of "American" and "American literature" in addition to creating a growing awareness "that archival projects shift students' relationships to history and literature. They begin to think of themselves as *makers* and as *made*, and this causes them to read texts differently" ("Making" 96).

In addition, WQED, the public television station located in Pittsburgh, created a program, *A History of Pittsburgh in 17 Objects*, based on the BBC's *The History of the World in 100 Objects*. The program originates in Rick Sebak's office at WQED and his collection of items and moves out from there. He begins

with a chalk souvenir of a blockhouse and relates it to Pittsburgh's beginnings, then to a powder horn from the fur trade era which leads to ancient breweries and the local glassmaking industry. A Heinz pickle pin, neon signs and the man who made them, a camera and photos of a local artist, trolley tokens, and the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area are some of the items Sebak discusses. His segues between objects and his narrative would make excellent analytical material if students wished to duplicate the idea of using artifacts to tell the story of a place (*A History*).

Story offers FYC students a practical public forum. Charles Bazerman suggests literacy includes "having something to say to real people in real, complex circumstances in order to accomplish real tasks that depend on and invoke much local as well as extensive knowledge" ("The"). Narrative and culture offer ways for student work to be published. For instance, one colleague in Texas encourages his students to write about events particular to their cultures such as cultural foodways or an event like the *quinceanera*, the celebration of a fifteen-year-old Hispanic girl's entry into womanhood. His students are urged to submit papers to the Texas Folklore Society, some of which have been accepted.

Additional opportunities for publishing exist as organizations and programs invite the public sharing of experience in particular areas such as writing an essay about one's beliefs (*This I Believe*), relating encounters with immigration laws and policies (National Council of La Raza), or sharing end-of-life experiences such as good deaths/bad deaths (The Conversation Project). A

list follows that is not conclusive but illustrates the number of organizations interested in publishing and the range of subject matter (see Table 10):

Table 10

Organizations and Programs Interested in Storytelling

The Conversation Project	Disability: It's Our Story
Facebook Stories	National Council of la Raza
National Museum of Jewish History	Quilters: Save Our Stories Project
StoryCorps	StoryCorps's National Day of Listening
This I Believe	Veterans' History Project
WPSU <i>Your Town</i>	

Four organizations may be of particular interest in the way they expand the possibilities of practical application of literacy heritages through story. Students can interact with archives in various ways. For instance, if students have a family member who served in the military, they can download interview information from the Veterans' History Project, interview that family member, submit the material to the archive, and write about the archive, their experience, and the application of story in that instance. There is an official recognition when information is archived—that story is important enough to be saved in a national database. If a student can assist a family member with saving a life story, that student will be engaged in real life application of learning. Ken Bain states in *What the Best College Teachers Do*: “authentic tasks will arouse curiosity,

challenging students to rethink their assumptions and examine their mental modes of reality” (47).

The National Day of Listening, sponsored by StoryCorps as an alternative to Black Friday, urges people to collect stories on the day after Thanksgiving from members of any group such as members of family, organizations, companies, grandparents, or the military. The site has lengthy lists of questions that would be helpful for students and which can be used in general or with particular groups.

Facebook offers space for stories on themes sponsored by various organizations such as the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the American Red Cross. Themes include causes, celebrities, education, government, health, love, military, movements, music, natural disasters, peace, pets, politics, small business, sports, and travel. Sports, music, and causes have the most sponsors. Students might analyze the site and think about what kind of stories are told and why; who sponsors the themes and why; who responds to the sites, and what the writing is like—are there similarities and differences; is it of interest and, if so, why? Analyzing writing is one way to learn to notice the intricacies of writing. Analyzing my writing helped me to better understand myself and see myself separately as a writer making rhetorical decisions.

WPSU, the public service television station associated with Pennsylvania State University, invites the public to become “storytellers” for its program *Your Town* which documents local communities. In its quest for a community’s “heritage and ... spirit,” the station looks for “profiles of organizations, schools,

attractions, and local folklore [to] make great stories and give viewers a sense of your area.” This program could serve as an informative model to illustrate the notion that facts alone cannot tell a story. How are the heritage and spirit of a place portrayed? To what extent is story and folk heritages incorporated into the telling?

In addition to the above, broad histories of towns and regions are being collected. The public library in Delft, The Netherlands, is considered a premier example. It distributes “story” in a variety of forms—mp3 players, books, DVDs, art work; in addition, its DOK Agora project gives local people the opportunity to share story. Library patrons come in and view/listen to the stories and share their own memories to add to the archives. Street images from the 1900s to the present add to the sense of lived experience. The library also used story on its website to attract interest. For instance, the library used gaming interest to increase knowledge among users. They placed gaming within the library, noticed the increase in book circulation among teens who gamed, told the story on websites, and worked with Delft University of Technology to hold a national conference on gaming in education and new literacy. The library considers itself “Home of the Sheanachies” as it sends its people out to collect story, including best practices (Van de Geer and Boekesteijn).

Are there instances or situations where life writing, storytelling, folklore, and heritage literacy should not be applied to a college composition class?

Although archives offer a rich resource for students, they will not appeal to all students. Any archive takes time online to peruse but offers a wealth of

possible subjects for research such as artifacts, oral histories, folk music, and oral storytelling. Archival research can give practical technology practice, but first-year students are in the process of learning technology and academic research and arrive at college with varying degrees of preparedness and experience with technology. The learning curve can be steep. It was the most difficult aspect of returning to college for me.

Summary

This study has examined the feasibility of applying literacy heritages to the first-year composition course and instances where they may not apply to the course. In the first chapter of this study, I noted my bias toward the inclusion of literacy heritages based on my experiences as a storyteller, author, and educator. Although I believe I have fairly researched instances where literacy heritages may not be suitable, the overwhelming bulk of the research portrays my bias.

Literacy heritages can enhance a first-year composition course because students already interact with them, for instance, through social media, gaming, LARP, and oral storytelling. Narrative is important beyond the first essay assignment because it influences life-changing decisions in students' personal lives through various kinds of interviews and applications such as those for employment, adoptions, graduate studies, accident reports, and the like.

Students can explore literacy heritages through place, people, and the environment. Concepts and histories of home, neighborhoods, and regions are laden with examples of possibilities for story, folklore, and how knowledge

changes when passed from one generation to another. Groups, organizations, genres, people, and places can be analyzed with criteria that reveal values, traditions, customs, histories, and identities. In addition, folklore and storytelling offer state and federal archives as a rich resource for research. Archives also offer an opportunity to publish personal narratives which reinforces a perception of the practical reality of composition studies in a real world and counters possible negative associations with the essay form.

However, care should be taken when applying heritage literacies to the first-year composition course. Students may relate storytelling to children and be unaware of the broader application of term. Folklore/folklife might be considered as without substance or unrelated to their interests. If the topics do not resonate with learners, their engagement with the material is affected. Additionally, teachers may hesitate to use literacy heritages based on a belief they need specialty knowledge or because of a possible history of bias toward folklore, storytelling, or personal writing. Narrative in composition studies is new enough that teachers are just beginning to trust narrative from colleagues and may not extend that trust to students. Finally, students may perceive literacy heritages as intrusive. They may view home-related topics as an anathema, for whatever reasons, and consider any topic related to home a violation of privacy rights. In addition, groups may be resent intrusion, and harm is a possibility, as Hurston points out.

In conclusion, literacy heritages offer possibilities for students to access their knowledge of place, people, and local environments—but with cautions. A

plethora of topics is possible, but care must be taken to provide alternative measures so as not to intrude on privacy issues for students or interviewees. Learners from cultures with a rich oral heritage can take advantage of their background knowledge and apply it in academic ways. Educators will need reassurance they do not need a specialized knowledge to incorporate literacy heritages into their courses. The wealth of archives available and the opportunities to publish enhance the practical application of literacy heritages. However, one aspect of literacy heritages important to me is that they build on learners' prior knowledge as a way of knowing and encourage academic research into such, which may affect retention. This may enhance learners' perception of themselves as belonging in an academic setting, especially when that knowledge is grounded linguistically and historically to real places familiar to them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“FOUND” ITEMS AND COMING TO VOICE

This study has served as a gathering place for disparate strands of knowledge across disciplines that could benefit first-year learners in composition studies. When I began my study, I wanted to show that the breadth of research and essay topics available for students which could key into their knowledge of local and regional place, people, and environments. I also wanted a tool to expand students' vision—something they could grasp to enlarge and examine the world around them. I likened the field and this study to the theme, structure, and content of Mark Bradford and Julie Mehretu's collage. New ways of envisioning known territory was reflected in the history of collages where, in the previous century, grid-based structures were flat and impersonal. However, 21st century multimedia representations incorporate “found” material to create a structure reflecting diverse relations among people and place and portraying known locations with previously unseen characteristics and communities. Literacy heritages open a plethora of new opportunities for research and for accessing students' knowledge; *[re]storying the commons* was found to be a tool to enlarge vision and situate those stories within a larger context.

Literacy Heritages and Popular Culture

Narrative and life writing are national phenomena with an international scope. Technology echoes this interest, especially with the millennial generation. The array of national and state websites and archives as well as the plethora of public organizations collecting stories reflect the driving interests today of the

popular culture. Archives are being established to manage our cultural knowledge—to collect and protect our ways of knowing—our wisdom.

Literacy Heritages and the Academy

However, the home-based knowledge of our students is not always welcomed in the academy. Students are urged to find “objective” topics with library sources and are groomed to an academic culture that elevates its ways of knowing as superior to those in a student’s background. The narrative, folk knowledge, informal ways of passing on knowledge and the life experience of ordinary people are generally not readily recognized in the academy as topics for essays, especially for first-year learners.

Re-visioning the Personal

Academic interest in personal writing has had a volatile history, as previously related in this study. However, literacy heritages, as an aspect of life writing, expand the notion of “experience” to incorporate one’s local knowledge of the environment, of the people and cultures who have contributed to the area, and the land which has influenced how people came and why they decided to stay. The land enabled local industries and crafts and provided a place for those local literacies to flourish, in their historical season. The stories of the growth, passing, and recapturing of knowledge—and the decisions involved in those processes—are the stuff of research that has the possibility of resonating with the insider knowledge of first-year learners and others. Ways of knowing can be traced and respected within communities, families, groups, and organizations, especially when applying Suzanne K. Rumsey’s analysis structure of what stayed

the same, what was dropped, and what was adapted when intergenerational knowledge is passed.

Dichotomy of Identities

Academic respect may also help to dissipate the dichotomy between academic and home-based identities. Building on prior knowledge as a way of knowing and encouraging academic research into such may enhance learners' perceptions of themselves as belonging in an academic setting, especially when that knowledge is grounded, geographically, in real places familiar to them.

Synthesizing Knowledge

The respect for local knowledge and experience, exemplified by literacy heritages, opens opportunities to share academic perspectives. The specialized knowledge of the academy does not need to remain isolated within disciplinary boundaries. Just as this study illustrates the synthesis and integration of information from a variety of disciplines so, too, literacy heritages can serve as a way to better understand how people manage knowledge. Pagnucci and Mauriello suggest narrative is beyond the scope of individual disciplines and call for all perspectives to share knowledge (8). This study demonstrates the need to gather knowledge across the disciplines in order to understand how we know what we know and to share that story, as a means of [re]storying the commons, with students.

Literacy Heritages and 21st Century Educational Concerns

Literacy heritages as a means of [re]storying the commons not only serve to integrate learners' cultures with academic culture, they offer a way to deal with

21st century educational concerns. The application of narrative reflects cross-disciplinary interests, core subjects, and interdisciplinary themes. These are all values “essential to student success” as stated in *Framework for 21st Century Learning*.

Most importantly, however, heritage literacies address some of the WPA’s 21st century higher education concerns: “identity, authorship, multiculturalism, literacy definitions, and home literacies” (Grimm, *Good xiii*). As I discussed in chapter four, folklife recognizes the wisdom and knowledge of ordinary people. Values and **identity** are transmitted through language, crafts of place, local decisions, and story, whether pertaining to a culture, an organization, a place, an occupation, a group of people, or an individual. Essays with scholarly research accessing learners’ insider knowledge may better reflect original work and be less vulnerable to **plagiarism**. In addition, storytelling is common to cultures around the world as is folklore and is thus **multicultural** with abundant examples of diversity for student research. Storytelling and folklore can be considered also as a means of transferring knowledge—as a **literacy** heritage and contain multiple examples of the transfer of knowledge such as occupational literacies. Additionally, the intergenerational transfer of knowledge can be studied as Rumsey’s heritage literacy, and **home literacies** can be studied as a means of knowledge transfer whether formally or informally. The topics in literacy heritages combined with *[re]storying the commons* and the first-year composition classroom may well reflect Mary Louis Pratt’s vision of “pedagogical arts” in the “safe place” of the contact zone which includes “exercises in storytelling and in

identifying with ideals, interests, histories, and attitudes of others...and the redemption of the oral” (184).

Wisdom

Most of all, literacy heritages and [re]storying the commons are founded on the importance of a single ordinary life and the wisdom acquired and passed in that lifetime. Wisdom is not normally a term used in the academy; it is more attributed to the folk as in *folk wisdom* in various proverbs. However, Claire Gaudiani, president of Connecticut College and author of several books on wisdom, notes wisdom as an asset: “wisdom capital—the available store of thought collected over thousands of years that calls us to live in ways that sustain well-being for others, especially in a time of expanding diversity, without wisdom capital and the values it sustains, we cannot have strong communities” (60).

This notion of wisdom as capital—an asset to be drawn on—complements C.A. Bowers’ thinking on the ancient notion of *the commons*: that which was held and used in common for the good of the community which included the environment—air and language, intergenerational stories “which renewed [people’s] sense of identity and values,” local craft knowledge developed through time, decision-making processes, games and artworks, plants and medicines developed from plant, in addition to other things (2). Wisdom—as story, architecture, crafts, technologies, songs, language, games, and more—weaves together the literacies we acquire, our multiple ways of knowing. Equally important are instances revealing our humanity with our lack of wisdom, and the possible outcomes of gaining knowledge through difficulty and errors as a path of

learning. [Re]storying the commons is a tool to reveal diverse relations among people and place and to portray our known locations with previously unseen characteristics and communities, such as our wisdom .

Coming to Voice

Just as the knowledge the student brings is essential to composition studies, so, too, my knowledge, found in the course of this study, is significant. When I began this study, I did not anticipate the effect writing the research would have on me as a writer and as a teacher of writing. I had been well trained in objective research (is there such a thing?) and was comfortable reporting research with a discrete “I,” but something was missing. It has taken the lengthy process of writing this study to understand that I lacked the perception of myself as a writer—despite publication. Unraveling that notion may help other educators and writers.

The “Writer” as a Creative Communicator

The term “writer,” I have found, carries enormous baggage of which I was unaware. I had weighted the term with responsibilities, a persona separate from my own, and emotional tentacles.

*Insight comes and memory—
each sentence a struggle laden
with references validating
the work done;
the author without authority.*

Reporting research in an objective manner validates the research but can deny one's own sense of authorship. As I wrote this research-laden study, I strained at the confines of parenthetical documentation and wondered when I would have the experience and credentials to write what I knew.

Does the term “writer” lack resonance with others? It implies a result subject to levels of outside approval. I have no difficulty understanding myself as a storyteller; a historian; a literary analyst; a textual composer; a technical writer; a hack; a poet; an oral/aural/visual communicator and craftsman learning new applications of language and audience; I even like the term “creative communicator.” If stories carry our identities and values, what stories are attached to the term “writer?” Do students identify themselves as “writers”? We apply the catchall term, “writer,” with all its attendant history of success and failure and tell students that if they write, they are writers. It sounds good, but is that true, especially when educators classify the student in “various stages of preparedness” with its negative implications of an acceptable preparedness measurement consisting of predetermined stages? What weights do students attach to the term? Does it hinder or limit their sense of creativity?

What changed my perceptions to enable a foundational shift to a broader perception of myself as a creative communicator? The slow process of analyzing why and how I wrote what I did, of letting insights bubble up, of hearing and seeing myself move within the work gave space for me to discover the decisions I made—as a communicator engaged with specific audiences.

Analysis and Reflection

It was through analysis that I found the extent of the storytelling influence in my written works. Storytelling permeates my writing with oral/aural understanding and with organization. It is a world in which I move imaginatively, creating an atmosphere of sound and sense for an audience, within time constraints. It includes an incredible sense of fun and playfulness and delight. Writing for composition classes had nothing to do with story for me until I wrote this study gathering the disparate strands of research into one place and giving voice to my oral/aural world of knowledge and extending respect to the various ways we come to know what we know.

Storyline dominates all material, but audience trumps story. Material is organized to engage an oral/aural audience so they can place themselves within the material and remember enough to make their own connections. I do not overwhelm an audience with details but rather choose one to illustrate a character trait such as prayer illustrating Marie de Agreda's sense of devotion. My language connects to my audience so that they are not translating words while I move on orally. No lengthy academic sentences are needed, but it is always a challenge to write simply, not simplistically.

It is difficult to re-create that dynamic relationship between an audience and a speaker or performer. It is a tangible, almost palpable, sense which the speaker/teller adapts, on the spot, based on reading the audience. Creating a space in the first-year composition course for spoken-word art may enhance

students' audience perceptions and encourage performance as a way into writing and rhetoric.

Audience influences choice of topic, the way I imagine the research, and the way I develop it. I listen in the *telling space*, imagine audience interests, walk among the facts, observe and listen to research and to imagined audience responses. I have learned to pay attention—to listen and see, to note my inner responses and questions—to trust my nose and follow the scent—to trust the story sense will come. I have learned to live in that space through interacting with real audiences. However, the extent of my storyteller's awareness of audience and its influence on my world of writing astounded me.

How can we teach the sound and sense of an audience without an oral/aural component—one beyond the end-of-term presentation of the written work as part of the grade? Based on departmental divisions, students might limit their thinking of oral/aural sound and audience dynamics to speeches, theater, or performance poetry. How can we expect students to develop the nuances of audience without the practice of performing with an audience—and one not of their classmates who are known to them? Would creating a space in the first-year composition course for spoken word art enhance students' perceptions of audience and influence students' writing? Could *performance narrative* be a means into rhetorical understanding?

Reflection about material left out became an “aha” moment for me—I found my “writer” strewn on the floor or deleted. As I thought about my writing as text, I became separated from the work. I noticed what had been included and

excluded—for whatever reason. As I questioned inclusion and exclusion, I became aware of the constant flow of *decisions* involved in the process of finding a topic, gathering material, organizing it, and presenting it in a final form. These decisions were not general editing decisions; the inner editor's voice was stilled until needed. These decisions were like an inner director: look at that; what about this; think about that later for an article; yeah, that's interesting but who cares. I trusted that inner conversation, that way of knowing, and made decisions based on it.

As I met this decision-maker, my view changed. I saw the end product of a writing assignment as a miniscule part of the whole story, almost an aside; the important story lay ignored on the floor. How could we have possibly told students they were writers without helping them discover the writer—the creative communicator— in their own writing?

I am reminded of the story of *The Ugly Duckling* who finally recognizes who he is by identifying himself in other swans [sic]. We use textbooks to explain and to model the writing we want students to learn, but what if students analyzed their own work to understand how they *already function* as writers? For instance, as I wrote this study and incorporated more personal writing into it, I found my experiences were similar to other writers. For instance, the darkness of doubt Rainer Marie Rilke wrote of, and Donald Murray's sense of the "other" similar to my sense of an inner director. Frank McCourt notes that he did not know the value of his own experience, and I identified with that when analyzing, in chapter five, my own experience; I wrote that I did not have a "story" as such but wanted

the opportunity to share my knowledge. William Zinsser points out that the “large” stories are not about situations but how the situation influenced the author (40-41). Creating scenes through vignettes puts the reader in the story (Gutkind 21); and Gutkind and Fletcher note the decisions of a writer when submitting material to the limits of focus, an observation I had already made from the perspective of a storyteller (64).

I survived the depths of doubt, found an inner voice which directed my decisions and which I trusted, and learned of my storyteller’s influence through recognizing where I was already functioning as a writer, especially one in creative non-fiction. Rather than feel discouraged at what I did not know, I found elation and affirmation based on what I did know. It empowered me to consider what I wanted to learn next.

Writing first and then reading about what others have noticed also enabled me to develop my perceptions. For instance, I could have read a text *about* the phenomenon of another inner voice, but I would not have developed my *listening ear* or learned to trust that perception.

Small Works

The work of bits and pieces of writing became essential, for they primed my creative pump. Small works claimed space both on a page and in my life for me as a creative being learning a craft, gave me recognition not subject to a grade, developed my confidence in my research, and offered me a platform to present that research beyond the strictures and confines of an argumentative essay.

Small works gave me the opportunity to stamp my identity and values on institutional demands without arguing—opportunity to trust my creative sense. My basset hound sniffs the morning air for she reads the world—makes meaning—through the sense peculiar to her breed. Like her, I have learned if something gives me pause so that I lift my head or jut my jaw with a question to trust that response and inner sense. Small works gave me opportunity to begin to establish a knowing—to trust my inner wisdom that I was not irresponsible about writing but, rather, *experiencing a vital aspect of it*.

Small works *satisfied*—my need for accomplishment, closure, no restrictions, play, and escape from logic and academic pressures. They offered a place and a space for growth, for learning, for the possibility of future works—a safe place with the freedom and space to query or to bring to birth.

As an educator in composition studies, I would first acknowledge the creative communicators who are the learners in my classroom. An optional strand for small works should address that in addition to a required one-to-two page reflection as part of an assignment grade. I would use the term “creative communicators” to better reflect the larger reality of today’s multimedia learners and to free the idea of composition from the tentacles of text.

Future Research

This study brought together disparate strands of information and situated them within composition studies to re-envision the ways of knowing students bring to the academic table. Additional areas of research might include the following: Literacy heritages and implementing solutions to 21st century

educational concerns mentioned in this study. In addition, does writing about one's home place, environment, intergenerational knowledge, values, identity, etc. lessen the distance between home and school identities? Furthermore, does the term "writer" hinder students writing; do they identify more with the term "communicator"? Is it feasible to create a spoken word center in composition studies and study the relationship between oral/aural performance and rhetorical concerns? Could *performance narrative* be a means into rhetorical understanding?

Of particular interest is a discovery of a unique position held by the Composition & TESOL program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. My search of Proquest using the keyword "storytelling" and the subject heading "composition and rhetoric" netted nineteen results for "all" time periods. The dissertations were published from 1996 to 2013 by sixteen different schools. Only one school showed multiple publications. IUP has published four of the nineteen dissertations—almost 20%. However, with my dissertation, IUP will have published 25% of the dissertations combining storytelling and composition. This position may open doors for additional courses and research.

Full Circle

Literacy heritages, like the collage mentioned in chapter one, symbolize the power of the personal with its overlapping structure allowing "a new way of conveying information about places and the people who inhabit them" (K.Brown 106). J. Frank Dobie might question the notion of "new". The Table of Contents in his *The Guide to the Life and Literature of the Southwest, with a few*

Observations could be generalized to fit any community: the ethnic mix of cultures, early people and the way they work, local fauna and flowers, local industries and the industry of the people, wild flowers, the community's stories and songs, its customs and its challenges. Dobie had a theme that resonated with him and reflected the purpose of his life—"to dignify with significance" ordinary things (16, 9). Although Dobie sounded the call for story and recognition of ordinary knowledge one hundred years ago, it has taken until now for the call and the technology to come together. This study has shown the breadth of topics available for scholarly writing and research for first-year composition studies.

Our literacy heritages involve the passing of knowledge and the decisions surrounding that passing. From oral heritages to gaming, story and folklife are acknowledged means of passing our values, identities, our ways of knowing, and our wisdom. Composition studies may well become the place to synthesize knowledge across disciplines centered in narrative. *[Re]storying the commons* offers a way to welcome with respect our collective cultural voices and our diverse ways of knowing as captivating cultures in the composition classroom.

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Appendix A

CATHERINE DUBOIS: WOMAN OF COURAGE AND CONVICTION²

I learned of a Catherine DuBois through a letter written in 1940 by my great aunt, Edith Cruikshank. In that letter, she passed on various family stories, one of which related the capture of a Catherine DuBois by Indians in seventeenth-century New York. I was familiar with my nineteenth-century New York great-grandmother, Catherine DuBois, but I had never heard of a seventeenth-century grandmother named Catherine, especially one who had been captured by the Indians. In a spidery scrawl, Aunt Edith wrote,

At the time of the Indian uprising near Albany he [Louis DuBois, husband of Catherine] lead an attack against them—after one Catherine DuBois, a fine singer, was stolen by the Indians—at evening where tied to a tree she got permission to sing her death song—Her voice echoed through the woods, was recognized & led her husband & friends to her rescue—. (Cruikshank).

The account was intriguing; could it be true? An Internet search soon verified the family connection and the story of an Indian raid on June 10, 1663 at Kingston with the subsequent capture of women and children, including Catherine DuBois and her three children (Dubois).

This newly discovered grandmother, who had survived captivity, fascinated me. Could I discover information that might flesh out her name so I

² "Catherine DuBois: Woman of Courage and Conviction." By Jennifer Curtis. *The Captivity Narrative: Enduring Shackles and Emancipating Language of Subjectivity*. Ed. Benjamin Mark Allen and Dahia Messara. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012.

could better understand what kind of woman she was and if her captivity affected her? Her background, her captivity, and her husband's and her own Last Will and Testament yielded a surprising depth to this woman.

Background

She was born Catherine Blanchan to Matthys and Madeline Blanchan in Artois, France. Her birth is placed anywhere from 1629 (Heidgerd 12) to 1635. However, her parents married October 15, 1633 and, as she is the first child listed in her father's will and thus presumed eldest, a 1634 - 1635 birthdate is assumed (qtd. in "Blanchan"). She would eventually flee France with her family, live in England and in the city of Mannheim in the German Palatinate, marry Louis DuBois, a fellow Huguenot, move to America, have eight surviving children, become a widow, marry a second time, and die in 1713 at the age of seventy-eight, given a 1635 birth date. Her given name was spelled in various ways. She signed her will "Cattolin," but her first husband, Louis, in his will referred to her as "Catrina" ("Catherine Blanchan"; "Dubois"). I will refer to her as Catherine as this is the spelling most other documents use.

Her family was Huguenot, French Protestants, who followed the teachings of Calvin ("History"). Understanding the religious persecution of the Huguenots and their economic influence may shed some light on Catherine's early years in Europe.

She was born into a country reeling with the memories of religious wars between the Catholic majority and the "heretics" or Protestant minority. From the mid-1500s to the end of that century, Protestants, whether known as Huguenots

or members of the Reformed religion, were persecuted. Although the Edict of Nantes in 1598 guaranteed Protestants many rights, Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu desired the elimination of the Huguenots and discriminations increased with the reign of Louis XIV (“History”). The Nimes and St. Bartholomew’s Day massacres had the effect of strengthening the Protestant movement and attracting people to the faith (Scoville, *The Persecution* 1-5).

Suffering was widespread and the Huguenots left France in waves throughout the 1600s (“Who”). The times were a “history of blood” with massacres and the accompanying loss of lands, property and rights (LeFevre 3). Baptismal and genealogical records were destroyed making it difficult or impossible for families to prove their origin, their rights, their identities (LeFevre iii-iv). Tombs in Protestant graveyards were destroyed (Butler, *The Huguenots* 13). Legal losses eventually included the right to hold public office and the right of appeal, and academic honors were also forfeited. Towns were destroyed and people threatened with being burned at the stake and with the Spanish Inquisition. Persecution was not limited to Huguenots. Supporters who befriended them were fined, and informers were given incentives to turn them in so to receive up to one-third of the Huguenot estate (Baird 4, 23-24).

Born into a Huguenot family in France, Catherine was born into a heritage of faith and courage in the face of persecution and strife.

Although the Huguenots were persecuted, they were an influential economic force. Catherine’s father and husband were part of that economic force and culture. The Protestant faith was “deeply rooted among artisans and

merchants” and the “nobility and lesser aristocracy” (Butler, *The Huguenots* 13). Warren C. Scoville in *The Persecution of Huguenots and French Economic Development 1680-1720* suggests that this French Christian minority, who were about ten percent of the population and who controlled much of the trade of the country by 1664, had a practical influence on the country (1-5).

The Huguenots were active in legal and financial spheres. They controlled shipping in various port cities as well as managed and marketed a broad range of industries, goods and services such as wine, tobacco, oils, cheeses, lead, starch, salted fish, paper mills, tan yards, glass factories, sugar refineries, fabrics—silks, linens, velvets, sail cloth. These Protestant merchants in cities across France were acknowledged for their influence, business genius, standard of living, wealth, and monopoly of particular businesses such as the wholesale trade in the city of Metz. Their religion based on Calvinism “became the gospel of hard work, thrift, and temperance (Scoville, “The Huguenots” 438; 425-429”).

Their work ethic was recognized universally. Charles Weiss, author of *History of the French Protestants Refugees from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes to the Present Time* adds that the “irreproachable integrity” of the Huguenots commanded the respect even of their enemies (26). Their work ethic produced the “best paper” in Europe for the finest printing in London, Paris, and Amsterdam was done on Ambert papers produced in Protestant mills (30). Protestants manufactured and marketed cloth of gold, gold and silver lace, velvets equal to those produced in Genoa, Italy, and they supplied nearly all the need in France for plain taffeta through silk manufacturing (30-32).

The Huguenots dominated key industries often because of their new technologies and the art of networking. Their weavers were “more technically advanced” than the weavers in England which promoted jealousy and persecution when the Huguenots moved there (Butler *The Huguenots* 34). The French Protestants perfected “magnificent linen” through the discovery of the bleaching process and developed the stocking loom which greatly increased the production of silk, cotton, and woolen stockings (Weiss 28-31). They knew a “Dutch secret”—how to produce an exceptionally fine cloth from wool (Scoville, “The Huguenot” 430). In addition, the families developed international networks of current information through Protestant ties in England and Europe. In 1665, the Lieutenant General at Caen wrote:

...merchants of this city [i.e., Caen] profess the Reputedly Reformed Religion, and since they have better access and more experience in Religion, and , since they have a better access and more experience in England and Holland due to the conformity of their religion, they handle all the trade in cloth and other merchandise which originates from this region. (Scoville “The Huguenots” 428).

The networks were kept within the family. Huguenots sent their sons to other countries to work with the managers of major industries (Scoville, “The Huguenots” 428-31).

Their sense of what to buy and sell and their international networks in business and religion gave them a broad vision and sense of their times.

Although they lost lands and goods and had to flee France, they took with them their knowledge, skills, and economic connections which they applied wherever they went.

Catherine's background would have been influenced by her father and mother's home. He had been "of some note" in his home in France (qtd in Heidgerd 12). It was generally acknowledged that the main bulk of Catherine's husband's wealth originated with him. It would seem he was astute for he left France thirty years before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. It is known he was in England at a baptism in 1647 and was one of the first Huguenots to take advantage of an offer to go to Mannheim in 1651 ("Catherine Blanchan"). There he was a "burgher" and, in 1552, was one of the first deacons elected to the Huguenot congregation (Lefevre 6). Catherine's father lost property in "his native place and at Armentiers in Flanders as well as elsewhere" (Heidgerd 13). Few exiles were wealthy as their assets remained in France; however, they became successful in exile because they brought their true assets with them—their "knowledge, confidence, and 'wherewithal' that came with it [the ability to make money]"(Butler, *The Huguenots* 197).

While in Mannheim, Catherine married Louis DuBois, a silk merchant. Her father and mother and siblings sailed to America on *The Gilded Otter* in 1660 while Louis and Catherine with two children followed a year later (LeFevre 6-7).

As a Huguenot refugee, Catherine would have learned to adapt to geographic, economic, and personal change. Her experiences in leaving her native land, adapting to different economic conditions, languages, and cultures in

London and Mannheim, making the journey across the Atlantic Ocean in a seventeenth-century sailing vessel, and creating a home in the American wilderness of 1661 would have influenced her faith, her ability to adapt, and her courage.

Captivity

The DuBois family came to New Amsterdam (now New York City) and went north up the Hudson River to Esopas later called Kingston, a settlement below Albany. In 1663, Louis DuBois and two brothers-in-law received ground briefs for land near Kingston in New Village, or Hurley as it was called. Forty-six days later, on June 10, 1663, Kingston and New Village were attacked and thirty-three prisoners were taken (Heidgerd 13). The Indians had been invited to come and renew the peace. The stockade was “dilapidated,” and the fort had few soldiers and was “nearly incapable of defense”(Dubois). A fire was set to the windward side of the village. An account at the time relates, “There lay the burnt and slaughtered bodies, together with those wounded by bullets and axes. The last agonies and lamentations of many were dreadful to hear”; and another adds that the “dead lay like sheaves behind a mower”(Dubois).

The accounts of the Indian attack agree on the circumstances but vary in detail. It is not my purpose to compare accounts except as they might shed light on Catherine. The account of Captain Kreiger, the leader who came with soldiers to organize the rescue party, is preserved and cited in *The Life and Times of Louis DuBois* by Anson Dubois. Kreiger writes with a detachment worthy of a modern day police report with who, what, when, where, why and how duly noted:

“September 5th. Arrived, about two o’clock in the afternoon, within sight of their [Indian’s] fort, which we discovered situated on a lofty plain. Divided our force in two ...” He notes the placement of his men, the alarm of a squaw, the response of the Indians as fighting men who “courageously returned our fire,” and the account of the wounded and dead on both sides. He further relates that the prisoners were hid at night in different places in the woods. However, the evening before the rescue a visiting Mohawk Indian said, “Let them remain at liberty here, for you live far in the woods that the Dutch will not come hither, for they cannot come so far without being discovered before they reach you,” and so the prisoners were in camp. (Dubois).

Ralph LeFevre, author of *History of New Paltz, New York and Its Old Families*, relates an incident “dear to the Huguenot heart:” an incident based on “tradition” but one not at odds with Captain Kreiger’s account (7). The Indians were preparing to burn Catherine at the stake, and the women began singing the 137th psalm which the Indians so enjoyed they put off the captives’ death (7). E.M. Ruttenber, Orange County historian, suggests that it was not an Indian custom to burn women at the stake and it was more likely the women were to be exchanged for the recently captured chiefs sold as slaves and sent to Curcaco. However, LeFevre considers revenge as a motive for burning at the stake (8-9).

The DuBois Family Association base their information on *The Documentary History of the State of New York* and on family tradition— “there is a history among us for which we are not dependent on State archives,” noting the oral traditions have a clarity passed from early times. In this account, the

rescuers find “the wife of DuBois ... on a pile of wood, on which she was to be burned to death. For her consolation, she had engaged in singing psalms, which having excited the attention of the Indians, they urged her by signs to resume her singing”(Dubois).

Captain Kreiger’s perspective focuses on military details; the oral tradition reveals “the condition of the captives”(LeFevre 7). The oral tradition adds a different depth of detail; it gives Catherine DuBois heroic stature as a woman standing in the face of fire warding off death by singing her death song. As the wife of the leader of the community, Louis DuBois, she, too, would have a position of leadership within the community. In captivity, that role might be magnified.

The tradition of song in captivity has depth of meaning. It was the custom of the Huguenots to sing the psalms, and in France, that practice had once been forbidden to them in circumstances where they could be overheard (Dubois). Usually the 137th psalm was sung in a “slow, plaintive chant, in the minor mode” according to William E. DuBois who found, in a “folio copy of a French Bible, printed in Amsterdam”, that each psalm was given a particular tune (Dubois). Dawn Henwood of the University of Toronto suggests the psalms allowed a later captive, Mary Rowlandson, a means to express emotion. Henwood writes that the psalms gave Mary Rowlandson a public, liturgical language that centers her experience in the communal sphere of meaning but also empowers her to speak passionately of her own grief, confusion, and anger. They [the psalms] provide a means of self-expression under conditions that threaten to obliterate the captive’s

identity and even her sanity. (171).

I suggest that the Huguenot captives, not only used singing the psalms to vent their emotions, but also sung the psalms as a means to comfort their children, build their faith, and declare destruction upon their captors by entering a familiar story of captivity and applying it to themselves.

It is immaterial who sang—Catherine or all the women—but that they did sing in captivity strikes me as true because of the children. The captives included one man, twelve women (eleven of whom were mothers with captive children), and thirty-one children, three of whom were Catherine's (Dubois). A mother's heart and mind to care for and protect her children would be foremost in the midst of danger and death. With little ones of all ages, the mindset to maintain some semblance of calm, courage, and continuity could turn to the Huguenot custom of singing. The women would know the effects of song through their biblical knowledge and their own experience. David used music to calm King Saul (I Samuel 16.23); they would know that effect of song on their own lives and on their children. They knew the importance of verbalizing their belief to build faith (Romans 10.17). Singing the psalms was one way to verbalize their faith. However, the children might not have understanding of drawing on one's faith and the success of past endeavors to lend courage to present situations. The music of the songs would recall to the children the security and customs of home while the words would build the children's faith.

However, the choice of the 137th psalm also gave the women access to a familiar and victorious captivity story through which they portrayed active

resistance. The scene in the psalm involves the captives (Israel) and the captors (the Babylonians). The people of Israel are sitting by the river Babylon weeping as they think of their homeland, Zion: “For there they who carried us away captive required of us a song; And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of your songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”(*The Holy Bible* (KJV), Psalm 137.3,4). The captives could identify with the biblical narrative through the analogy of their circumstances: the Israelites were powerless captives, “wasted,” and mocked by captors who demand singing and laughter from a supposedly defeated people. Catherine and the women could identify with the characters in the captivity story. By agreeing with the text that this is the “Lord’s song,” they subtly declare the Lord is in charge; they access their knowledge of the Lord at work, especially in this narrative.

The psalm continues. “O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; Happy shall he be that rewards you as you have served us. Happy shall he be, that takes and dashes thy little ones against the stones.” (Psalm 137. 8, 9). Although it may have been a song in the plaintive mode and in a minor key, the psalm itself is a trumpet of outrage, vengeance, and violence. The words act as a verbal curse. First, through likening the Indians to the “daughter of Babylon,” the women key into the historical narrative of Babylonian destruction and announce that destruction to the Indians. Then they declare an equal destruction upon the Indians as the captives had experienced and, finally, they wish a violent form of death to the children of the enemy. This is a song flung into the face of a captor

and sung with prophetic defiance. This is not a song of the defeated. This is a song in which the Huguenot women apply the triumphant captivity narrative to their situation, for they know the end of the Biblical narrative—that even though the Israelites went into captivity for seventy years, the Lord was in charge and their families returned to Zion. They knew the story. They could sing triumphantly for the language of the psalm not only allowed the women to vent their rage, it also afforded them the opportunity to declare destruction upon their captors.

Did Catherine's captivity affect her? It was an issue that surrounded her all her life. The Huguenot culture supported slavery. Jon Butler, the Howard R Lamar Professor of American Studies, History, and Religious Studies at Yale University and author of "The Huguenots and the American Experience," states that New York and South Carolina Huguenots "became slaveholders, a pattern that would mark the Huguenots refugees and those they enslaved in all the unfolding centuries of American history" (199). Despite their history of persecution, criticism of slavery from Protestant leaders in France and in America, and their own outrage at Louis XIV's enslavement of Protestant prisoners to the "infamous French galleys," Huguenots embraced slavery (Butler 199).

Louis and Catherine DuBois were no exception to that pattern—they owned slaves throughout their lives. In 1679, Louis DuBois sold a "negro named Mingoo for 1000 guilders" and a "negro and negress for 800 guilders" (Heidgerd 15), and in 1703 when Catherine was in her late sixties and remarried, she had a seventeen-year old negro girl named Rachel who was baptized and who

promised to serve her mistress and, after her mistress died, she promised to serve her master, Catherine's second husband Jean Cottyn, after which she would be "at liberty and free" (LeFevre 287). Slaves were bought, sold, and traded in the DuBois family.

It is in the Last Will and Testaments of Louis Dubois and his wife that more information is gleaned as to Catherine's character and the effect of captivity. She is a woman acknowledged in an unusual way by her husband, Louis DuBois. In his will in 1696, he appoints her administrator, an event highly unusual for the times:

My wife shall have the ordering of the estates; that is to say, to have the profits and perquisites of the same, so long as she remains a widow. But in the case she cometh to marry, then she shall have the right half of the whole estate, either land, houses, or any other goods; and the other half shall be amongst the children as above-said, equally dealt. (Dubois)

Usually a wife would only take what she brought to a marriage if she remarried (Dubois). Catherine receives half the estate. Appointing Catherine administrator makes a public statement of confidence in her, especially in a family with seven adult sons who could have administered the estate.

Catherine is a woman of courage, and one worthy of respect and trust. However, it is in her Last Will and Testament that she becomes known as a woman of commitment and where one can better understand the effect of captivity on her life. Catherine writes her will July 23, 1712 when she is seventy-

eight, based on a birthdate of 1635. Her language is forceful and direct. She declares her mind is sound and reiterates her faith. She then states,

...I wish and it is my Will, very justly, that the franchise dated September 22, 1702, which I gave to Rachel. Which is her name after being baptized, shall be observed and in full force and virtue from the first word of the page to the last word ..." (qtd. in Heidgerd 16,17)

In the September 5, 1703 baptismal record Rachel vows to serve her mistress and on her death to also serve Catherine's husband, Jan Cottyn. LeFevre adds that "her negro girl should not go as a slave" to Catherine's seven sons but rather serve the husband then "In all probability by the time the negro girl reached the age of 25 she became a free woman by the act of her mistress (287).

However, Catherine doesn't stop there. The Will continues,

"...and the said Rachel shall have and take after my death, my said third part of the profit, 30 pieces of eight, and the other things which are stated in the said indenture, and she shall take it before my children can divide my third part of the profit, and also, I wish and it is my Will, being very just, that the indenture dated August 17, 1709, which I gave to our negress Dina shall be observed and guarded in full force and virtue.(qtd. in Heidgerd 16,17)

Catherine not only insures the status of these two women of color, she

finances Rachel's freedom with hard cash which was extremely scarce. For instance, in 1640 John Winthrop writes, "The scarcity of money made a great change in all commerce. Merchants would sell no wares but for ready money, men could not pay their debts though they had enough (i.e. capital), prices of lands and cattle fell to one half and less ..." (Jordan). Coins could not be minted in the colonies nor exported from England. Money was so scarce that commodities were established with prices. For instance, in 1708, in New Hampshire, a bushel of wheat was 5 shillings. Iron nails, beaver pelts, tobacco, musket balls, alcoholic products, and grains were some of the commodities with set prices so people could pay their taxes (Jordan). Translating pieces of eight into today's worth is a "devilishly complex riddle" incorporating pounds, shillings and pence, and economic data of the times (Crews). What the coins are worth in today's money is perhaps not as important as the fact that Catherine directed that Rachel should have real money.

In the beginning of this article, I questioned if I could get to know this grandmother who lived three hundred and fifty years ago and if her captivity affected her. Through research, a remarkable woman of faith, adaptability, and trustworthiness comes to light. Endowed with the heritage of Huguenot faith in the face of persecution, Catherine DuBois adapted to the many changes of circumstance in her life and, according to tradition, was able to sing in the face of her captors and her children a song of triumphant faith and vengeance. Wife of the leader of the village, she was trusted by her husband to administer his estate. However, it is in her will that Catherine exhibits an effect of her captivity. In a

culture that endorses slavery, she stands against it. As a woman a former captive, she uses the legal weight of a Will to establish her will of freedom for two women of color and financial freedom for one. She is, indeed, a woman of courage and conviction.

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Appendix B

BEYOND TEXAS FOLKLORE: THE WOMAN IN BLUE³

Many strange tales lurk in the legends and folklore of the southwest. One of the strangest is one of the earliest: The Woman in Blue. Briefly, in the early 1600s, mission fathers in Texas were asked to investigate a report made by a nun in Spain who said she had visited the area and preached to Indians . . . when she was in a state of prayer in her village in Spain. In 1629, a group of Indians came to one of the missions and asked to be baptized, stating that a woman in blue had directed them there. The Custudio, Alonso de Benavides, went to Spain the following year, 1630, to meet with the young nun, Marie de Agreda, who had visions of herself speaking to Indians and whose order wore a blue cloak. She knew the Indian sign language, could describe some of the people, and seemed familiar with the country (Calahan 108-109). The mystical idea of bilocation, being in two places at the same time, and the documentation of the accounts at the time, both in Texas and in Spain, have added to the mystery and the endurance of the tale.

In America, we've emphasized the folkloric nature of the account and argued for and against the truth in the tale. However, the woman identified as the mysterious woman in blue, Maria de Agreda, was controversial in life and even more so after her death, when her ideas would divide Europe into two camps, the Agredists and the non-Agredists. She was a woman who influenced her own

³ "Beyond Texas Folklore: The Woman in Blue," by Jennifer Curtis. *Cowboys, Cops, Killers, and Ghosts: Legends and Lore in Texas*. Ed. Kenneth L. Untiedt. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2013. Publications of the Texas Folklore Society LXIX

century and the centuries to the present day. The magnitude of her influence was acknowledged in 1995 when Spain's radio and television, Espanola, named her one of the nine "most influential women in Spanish history" (Fedewa 5). Today, she is the topic of scholarly books published by university presses. Her work is studied in courses for women's studies and Spanish Literature, theologians discuss her writings, and Mel Gibson consulted her writings before making his movie *The Passion of Christ* (Fedewa 5). So, moving beyond Texas folklore, just who was the woman in blue?

She was an unusual child. She was born Maria Coronel in 1602 to devout Catholic parents and, throughout her life, she would have deeply spiritual moments or insights. Her mother counseled Maria to be watchful for such happenings, so that even as a young child she was aware of visions. As an adult Maria would write of a particular vision in childhood, "Suddenly my perception expanded ... I saw the extremes of good and evil, of light and darkness, of grace and sin. God etched this awareness into my heart with divine force" (Fedewa 17).

By age four, she had come to the attention of Bishop Ypes, a man who had served as King Felipe II's confessor and who had just completed a biography of Teresa of Avila. Maria was confirmed by him when she was four years old, at a time when it was usual for children to be confirmed when they reached the age seven or more. He must have recognized an unusual bent toward the spiritual in this child for he urged her parents to give her a special area in the family home where she could pray and study alone. When she was six years old, she attended school for a short time but soon grew sickly and was withdraw from

school never to return. When she was seven years old, she saw a play by Lope de Vega, *The New World as Discovered by Christopher Columbus*, depicting people in the world without knowledge of God, and it birthed a fierce evangelism in her and a desire to travel to America. Poor health continued through her childhood and when she was thirteen, she was so ill her parents prepared for her burial. At this time, she would write later, she became healed when accepted her pain. She learned that “Ever since, I found that when I focused my attention within, I would enter a state of exceedingly quiet prayer” (Fedewa 21; 19-24). Her focus on prayer was life-long.

In 1615, her mother had a vision for the family. She and her daughter were to create a convent of the family home and enter it while her husband and sons joined the Order of St. Francis. In 1620, this was accomplished.

Although Maria had little formal schooling, she read widely. The year when she wrote her first book, *Face of the Earth*, is debated even now by scholars. Some place it at age fifteen (Fedewa 25-26) or before her visitation to the Indians while others place the book at a later date (Colahan 29). The book is based largely on other people’s writings and her narration is as though she were experiencing being in the place described (Fedewa 25-26). She was able to discuss geography and cosmology as though she had been taught and read Latin with enough understanding to critique a translation. The evidence that she read histories is based on the books in the convent library and the footnotes referencing particular books in her seminal work, *The Mystical City of God* (Colahan 28). She was known to have an extraordinary memory and ability for

synthesis (Colahan 28). Although she attributed her knowledge to “heavenly intervention with an uneducated woman,” her writing reveals a well-read woman which might not have been acceptable at the time (Calahan 30).

With illness, prayer, and study dominating her childhood life, she did not have an active life with girls her own age. When she became well as a young teenager, she began to reach out to girls her own age, however, she was aware she was uncomfortable and awkward (Fedewa 21). By age sixteen, she had again withdrawn.

To sum up, she grew up in isolation, was steeped in a mystical sense of God, read widely and with considerable understanding, was passionate enough about her thoughts and beliefs to write a book at age fifteen. In today’s world, she might have been called a precocious child or a gifted child. Her abilities were recognized by adults as shown by her early confirmation and that recognition would continue throughout her life. By special dispensation of the pope, she was appointed the abbess of the convent at age twenty-five—an appointment usually reserved for women over the age of forty. She would be elected to that position for the rest of her life. In addition, Felipe IV, king of Spain, would seek her counsel and establish a correspondence with her that lasted more than twenty years and would include more than six hundred letters.

Her beginning years at the convent, 1620-1623, were difficult—she would refer to them as the “bad years” (Kendricks 13). This was the time of her visions of visiting the Indians more than five hundred times. She confessed her visionary travels to her confessor who did not keep silent. She would later write of this man

that he was enthusiastic about “extravagantly marvelous cases of religious life” and was not a cautious man (Colahan 94). She became an “overnight phenomena” (Fedewa 35). She suffered from illness and from bouts of terror, and there were instances when she or her confessor demanded the “hair shirt, the coat of mail worn next to the skin, a girdle of spiked rings, and chains and fetters” (Kendricks 12). It was a difficult time for all the women in the convent. The sisters were tired of this “abnormal creature”; Maria was thought insane, was mocked, beaten, denied communion, punished if she got up to say her prayers at night, not allowed to see her confessor except for a few minutes a week (Kendricks 12-13). At this time, the other nuns would secretly spy on her while she was at prayer to see if her body raised, or levitated, which it was seen to do. During these times, people said they had visions of their futures and healings occurred. Her superiors thought she was drawing attention to herself, but when she prayed for these things to cease at the instruction of a group of priests, her fellow nuns and her mother thought she had fallen from grace because these things did cease (Fedewa 34-35). She learned to cope with notoriety, betrayal, and the jealousy of the cloistered women.

She became a competent administrator. She was made the abbess of the convent, by papal bull, in 1627. She was twenty-five years old and challenged immediately for when she took over, the convent was “in a great state of decay” (“Maria”). A building project was initiated. Land had been given to expand, but it needed to be cleared and there was no money for the project. In five years, the land was cleared and by 1632 the new building had a lavatory with water and a

fountain in the garden. In July 1633, seven years after becoming abbess, the convent moved into its new building. In addition to managing the building project, she established a financial future by securing an endowment for the convent (Kendricks 21, 63). Under her guidance, the convent became prosperous and known as “one of the most fervent in Spain” (“Maria”).

She learned from experience. As an abbess, she taught the women in her care with a practical directness that later would be portrayed in her letters to the king. She did not encourage hair shirts and the like, telling her nuns that there was dangers in these things and that a hair shirt was more likely to make you bad tempered than holy (Kendricks 12). During her early bad years she was tormented with “impure thoughts”—sexual thoughts—and the knowledge of this she shared with her nuns in later years. She would add that this continued for years saying, “The Devil took advantage of that kind of temptation to give me a very bad time indeed” (Kendricks 13). In addition, as abbess she nursed the nuns and kept the communal privy clean (Kendricks 57). She did not want the job of abbess and continuously asked to be relieved of the post. She preferred a subordinate position. In 1658 she argued that she couldn’t do the convent any more good, that others needed to be trained to replace her, that it was difficult to rule women (Kendricks 63).

She was a reluctant authoress. She began writing *The Mystical City of God* in 1637 when she was thirty-five because her confessor insisted she write it. The book is a biography of Mary, the mother of Christ, and based on the nun’s visionary dialogue and experiences. She later burned the book at the insistence

of a temporary confessor who believed women should not write. She rewrote the book only under a strict command to obedience and the threat of censure. It was a monumental task for the “book” consisted of eight large volumes (now condensed to four) and took ten years to rewrite 1655-1665. She worried about how the book would be received, for revelatory literature was not received well in Spain at that time, and if the book was just the result of her active imagination. Her friends urged her to stop writing (Kendricks 72-73).

The book was printed in Madrid in 1670, after her death, and condemned by the Inquisition in 1681, put on the church’s banned books list because of a faulty translation but approved in 1747 (Plocheck). By 1912, the book had been published in more than sixty editions in Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Latin, Arabic, Polish, and English (xxv-xxvii). Today, this book has been published two hundred and fifty times and translated into more than a dozen languages and can be ordered through Amazon.com (Colahan 1).

The book posed difficult questions for the time: Was the Immaculate Conception of Mary valid as proposed by the Franciscans? Could man’s tradition be deemed equal in authority to the *Bible*? Europe was inflamed already by the Protestant Reformation’s focus on the *Bible* as the only authority for God. The issue of the Immaculate Conception caused great emotional divisions among Catholics such that its discussion was forbidden by popes on two occasions, 1616 and 1620. The argument of the Immaculate Conception was finally settled two hundred years later, in 1854, by Pope Pius IX. Until that time, Europe was divided into Agredists and non-Agredist camps.

She learned to cope with opposition. In 1635 she was questioned by a group of six priests appointed by the Inquisition to examine her spiritual experiences. Her confessor was included in the committee and the results were left an open question, but no fault was found with her. Fourteen years later, in 1649 she would again draw the attention of the Spanish Inquisition, and the old 1635 case was brought before the Supreme Council and an interrogation ordered. She had no friend or confessor at the time to help her. She had been ill in the infirmary and was carried into the meeting where she endured ten days of questioning (Kendricks 40-41). She would recant a document she signed in 1631 with Benavides which affirmed her experiences in the New World.

She wrote letters. Phillip IV, king of Spain, passed by the convent, met her, and commanded her to write him. He initiated a system to insure privacy where he wrote on one half of the paper and she answered on the other half while the king's courier waited for her reply. For the next twenty years, they would write more than six hundred letters. Her letters included advice on governing, military concerns, family matters, and her concerns. Her words are forthright from the first letter asking that he "forbid the wearing of unchaste clothing which encourages vice" (Fedewa 129). His concerns included the safe arrival of the silver fleet, the silver shipped from the Americas, the Portuguese and Flanders rebels, and the lack of money in the treasury (Fedewa 13-14).

She advised the king to begin teaching his son and heir to rule, and later consoled him in his grief at the deaths of his queen and his son. She mentions her concerns: "My dear Lord, I see many people without sufficient to eat and

unable to clothe themselves properly; and they are oppressed, disheartened, and indignant, for they and their children cannot survive under the burden of these taxes” (Kendricks 146). In 1661, she wrote:

Another thing, so many changes in coinage are extremely harmful. A man’s savings are the reward of his toil and he preserves them jealously; if the value of them is depreciated, or runs alarming risk of being depreciated, naturally he becomes angry. Your Majesty has many wise and disinterested people who will give you information about this and tell you that what I am saying is true. I am not informed by anyone, but by my inner conviction and my great love for your Majesty have compelled me to say this to you. (Kendricks 147).

In military matters, her writing is clear and practical. In 1643, she notes “ things move slowly with your army and I am sorry that so few come to Your majesty’s aid; for the grandees could take an active interest in the army, hearten your soldiers, bring them promptly to the colors, and make the men feel sure they will get their pay” (Kendricks 127). When the king wrote in 1648 that Catalonia will see little fighting and rumors have the French attacking Flanders, she cautioned about misdirection as a military strategy and advises fortifying Catalonia, and in another letter reminds the king that the enemy uses spies and weak spots and so warns of methods of recruitment. In another letter, she urges the king to appoint a general for to delay puts the army in a defensive position (Kendricks 128-129).

Her letters reveal a confidence to speak her mind with clarity and directness as well as an understanding of what she has accomplished. In a letter to the king she longs for an ordinary life, “The thing that distresses me the most is that I cannot achieve a buried life. All I have done, and I have done much, to keep secrets to myself seems to be of no avail. . . .I am so worried that I have just burnt some of my writings (Kendricks 62,75). She envies the security of the lives of ordinary nuns to which her confessor replied that “other nuns do not counsel kings” (Fedewa 155). She asks the king to keep the one copy of *The Mystical City of God* safe: “I am confident that it will not be revealed by Your Majesty in any circumstances, even if the Inquisition asks for the book” (Kendricks 76). In addition, she is known for her charity, supporting a hospital, girls without dowrys, and writing letters for people without jobs (Kendricks 64-65).

A care for accuracy in writing concerned her. In a letter to her advisor in 1660, she writes, “I have handed over the manuscript to the Father Guardian with reluctance because I was sure that additions and deletions would be made. They have put questions to me that I answered in writing, and it is easy to make a mistake, especially for me, an ignorant woman”. She asks for a “list of the faults with their paragraph-numbers; because now I have the task of reading through and revising my manuscript, and your corrections will come when they are very welcome indeed” (Kendricks 78-79). Her attention to detail and the breadth of her content belies the reference to herself as an “ignorant woman.”

Maria de Agreda died in 1665 at age sixty-three. In 1667, because of cellar dampness and the deterioration of wood, her coffin was opened. Her body

was found intact and sweet smelling, and so it was moved to the convent crypt. In 1672, she was declared “venerable” by the Catholic Church, part of the process toward sainthood. A faulty translation of the *Mystical City of God* had put the book on the church’s Forbidden Books, hindering the beatification process.

Her coffin has been opened fourteen times and her remains viewed by leading figures in France and Spain as well as doctors, surgeons, and church leaders. In 1989, her body was examined by forty-six people including the convent nuns and a medical team, and was found “incorrupt and unchanged since 1909”; however, a mask was placed over her face because a bone seen through her skin upset viewers in 1909 (Fedewa 239-248). The move for her sainthood continues today.

This story represents to me the fascination of folklore. Years ago I was drawn to the tale of the Lady in Blue mainly because of its instance of bilocation and its intriguing documentation. However, moving beyond the folklore, an extraordinary woman emerged—intelligent and widely read—an able administrator, advisor, and author of many books. Named one of one thousand most influential Hispanic Americans by *Grolier Scholastic* in their biography series in 2006, the woman in blue continues to be a woman of influence today.

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Appendix C

MOVING FORWARD BY DEGREES: LEARNING TO COPE WITH CHANGE, CHALLENGE, AND CHAOS ⁴

Original

I returned to college in 1997 to finish a degree begun twenty years before and to connect an interest in writing with a paycheck. I had raised a large family with my husband and worked part-time cleaning houses. It was time to move beyond my roles of mom, granny, and cleaning lady. Little did I realize when I began fourteen years ago, at an age when most people were beginning to think of retirement, that I would move through the higher education system to work with students as a peer tutor and adjunct instructor, that I would present papers at conferences and have some of my papers published, that I would have a never-ending battle with myself as I stepped into each new area of responsibility. This is not a story of jumping through academic hoops but one, rather, of facing past and present failures and learning to cope with change to meet the constant challenge to move into and stay in places where failure was a constant possibility, where learning encompassed extending grace to myself, where success became redefined. It seems a never-ending story for I am still in school and still doing battle with myself.

I had attempted school before and made many mistakes affecting my GPA. One semester I took six major courses while coping with a troubled marriage relationship and six children from preteens to toddlers. Taking too

⁴ "Moving Forward by Degrees: Learning to Cope with Change, Challenge, and Chaos." By Jennifer Curtis. Typescript submitted in response to a Call for Papers for *Because Your Story Matters*. Ed. Jennifer Bernadzikowski and Susan Levy. 2012.

much on at one time was devastating. Another time, I had no way to get to school and thought if I didn't show up the instructor would drop me. Wrong. The "Fs" on my record haunted me, and inwardly, I labeled myself a college dropout and failure.

A guest speaker at our church spurred me to try again saying, "An open door is placed before you and no man can shut it . . . except you." He suggested that many of the dreams and ideas people held might be God's plans for their lives. I liked inspiring stories and success literature. I needed words of encouragement, hope, and vision. As I passed San Jacinto College, a mile from my house in Houston, Texas, I kept thinking of an unfinished degree.

Attending community college was the hardest part of my education because so many adjustments were required, but the process of adapting to change grounded my future college work. I was full of misgivings. I doubted my ability to write a paper or learn grammar. I felt disloyal to my family taking time from them. I feared the old failure story. I worried about money and embarrassing myself. I had to move forward despite my concerns for success.

I started school with the backpack my grandson used in kindergarten and probably felt as terrified as he did on his first day of school. Transitioning to finding parking spaces, battling crowds, squeezing into small desk chairs, planning a semester's work for each course, galloping across campus, wading through administrative paperwork, and making time to study was overwhelming as I managed my varying roles. My experience juggling a complicated household schedule helped me manage my time.

The coursework was demanding, yet satisfying because I was learning and wasn't working with my back cleaning houses. I was working with my mind, and a good grade with comments on a paper was exhilarating. English courses were pure joy. I didn't know how to write but saw progress. I wanted all the feedback I could get and attended the writing center. My writing was the one thing I could call my own, and the encouragement I received at the center fueled my fire and made me want to do better. The English teachers and center personnel treated me as an equal with genuine respect. They practiced what Ken Bains, author of *What the Best College Teachers Do*, observed: best teachers created environments supportive of learning and thought in terms of learners, listened to them, and acknowledged the emotional transitions which occurred in response to new situations and ideas (45-47), I was even encouraged to present my work at a local conference. Their generosity of time and advice and their scholarship influenced my decision to teach in community colleges.

Computers, science, and math courses were another matter. Frustration ruled as I learned to work with a computer and the Internet. Often I rewrote papers from scratch because papers mysteriously disappeared, and science courses seemed like endurance marathons. However, math was a real problem. I didn't do math—I never even helped my kids with their math homework. I tested into the gatekeeper course required for university entrance and should have stopped and taken a preparatory class but didn't. The stress was enormous, but it was through this class that I came to an understanding that changed my life in college.

That math class demanded change. I was dismayed when I headed to the last available seat in the classroom for I would be sitting with the tattooed, pierced, spiked-hair young males at the back of the room. I remember noting, with silent laughter, the dismay on their faces when they saw a silver-haired, middle-aged, plump woman headed their way.

Studying was hard. I couldn't make the connections between the oral lecture, the text, and the problems. I haunted the math lab. I was falling behind. After the first test, two guys nearest me looked at me questioningly as they shared grades. I covered my paper and shook my head. I had a 27. The next test we commiserated with each other as I shared my almost passing grade. We were speaking now finding common things to talk about. I was over their outward appearance; they were over my silver hair.

The classroom had more space now as about half the students had dropped out. I didn't want to quit. I wanted a good grade but didn't comprehend math. I needed a "D" to pass. Grade point average bowed to practicality and reality. I also knew that if I did not pass this class, I would take it again. Facing the worst case scenario and having a backup plan eased some stress from fear of failure.

I passed the third test in the seventies and knew I had a fighting chance with my homework grades and attendance. The fourth test was the clincher. The guys around me were worried, too. One day we were gathering our stuff after class when they turned to me and said, "Hey, lady." That was what they called me.

“Hey, Lady, how are you doing?”

“Not so good,” I replied.

“Yah, we noticed.”

They then said something that changed my life.

“Hey, Lady, us guys get together to study over at the coffee shop for pizza on Fridays. We wondered if you would like to join us. You know we learn better when we teach someone.”

I mumbled something through my tears and stood in the hallway as masses of young students from all walks of life flowed through the hallways. I started school still in my role as an older woman from a suburban neighborhood. I hadn't accepted my role as a student—equal with all students. I left that classroom with a different perspective. The guys at the back of the room helped me make the transition to “student.” It was the first of many transitions—and the most important one.

I moved on to the University of Houston—Clear Lake and eventually to other colleges and degrees. However, the pattern for coping with change was laid at the community college. I found that although I wanted a degree, the change required in me cost more and took longer than I expected. I learned to make mistakes in public and not run away from embarrassing situations. I learned to release myself from my own and others' expectations—to live in practical reality and to forgive myself when I disappointed myself. I learned I could live through and move on in spite of chaotic situations at home and at

school. My ducks never thought of being in a row. Most of all, I learned to redefine failure and success.

To the extent that I labeled myself a college dropout and a failure, I was one. To the extent that I agreed with other's negative opinions of me, I was entrapped by that thing. I learned that any new endeavor is accompanied by scary, questionable outcomes. Expecting difficulty and doubt helped me cope with the sometimes devastating negative emotions that accompanied them. I learned that to risk failure as part of the process of change is not equivalent to living as a failure.

Stories have been essential to trusting the process of change. Stories are structured with someone or something owning a problem and trying to solve the problem while experiencing moving through obstacles to reach the outcome. Whether a folk story of "Jack" seeking his fortune and fighting a giant, a Bible story, a family story of immigration and loss, or personal stories of people coping with various situations—stories have fashioned my expectations. Obstacles and difficulties are not foreign to life but rather the stuff of life; it's in the grappling with them that we learn to live life and pass on our wisdom through experiences. Family stories of hardship especially affected me. One grandmother as a young child coped with change and loss. Her family emigrated from Ireland in the late 1800s and when they arrived here, her parents died. The children were farmed out, and the parents in my grandmother's second family also soon died. She worked for third family for her living for child labor was common. She survived. My paternal grandfather was rescued from Florida swamps by a sister who

brought him to New England where he worked twelve hour days carrying beer to laborers and then went to school at night. He was of Portuguese descent which he hid most of his life because of shame, he told me at the end of his life, for at the beginning of the twentieth century the Portuguese were shunned as cutthroats and murderers. I identified with their hurt and pain and survival.

I've had to redefine success as I've journeyed through academia. Success cannot be defined only in terms of completing a degree. Success is incomplete without the degree to which people have been changed. Bain notes that "the best teachers assume that learning has little meaning unless it produces a sustained and substantial influence on the way people think, act, and feel" (17). College is not a pass/fail evaluation. Academic knowledge and its measurement are only part of the journey. My college experience opened the door for me to envision myself as a professional—to do battle with myself and, despite the looming threat of fears and failures, force myself into uncomfortable new areas. Presenting papers, writing stories, teaching, and consulting are directly attributable to Bain's "sustained and substantial" learning and motivated me to continue. My math grade may have reflected "success" on paper, yet I believe the grade was better than my work deserved.

I still am challenged to cope with change despite past experiences. Doubts assail. Chaos threatens. Cancer challenges. In the process, I'm reminded that endeavors take longer and cost more than I expected. And I remember the stories—old and new—mine and others—and to look for the sustainable wisdom that empowers.

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Word Count: 1931

Appendix D

TRIM ONE: "MOVING"

I started school with the backpack my grandson used in kindergarten and probably felt as terrified as he did on his first day of school. I had attempted college before and made many mistakes affecting my GPA. One semester I took six major courses while coping with a troubled marriage and raising six children from preteens to toddlers. Taking on too much at one time was devastating. Another time, I had no way to get to school and thought if I didn't show up the instructor would drop me. Wrong. The "Fs" on my record haunted me, and inwardly, I labeled myself a college dropout and failure.

I put college and dreams of writing out of my mind, raised a large family, helped raise a grandchild, and worked part-time as a cleaning lady. One day a guest speaker at our church spurred me to reconsider old dreams when he said, "An open door is placed before you and no man can shut it . . . except you." That powerful image and a desire to turn an interest in writing into a paycheck motivated me to register at San Jacinto College near my house.

I was full of misgivings. I doubted my ability to write a paper or learn grammar. I felt disloyal to my family. I feared the old failure story and embarrassing myself. I worried about money. However, to be successful, I had to move forward despite my concerns.

Transitioning from family life to finding parking spaces, battling crowds, squeezing into small desk chairs, planning a semester's work for each course, galloping across campus, wading through administrative paperwork, and making

time to study felt overwhelming. However, my experience juggling a complicated household schedule helped me manage my time. Balancing football practice, drill team meetings, lamb care for Ag, church and household activities with a single car taught me to work with many demands on my time and to focus on essentials.

The coursework was demanding, yet satisfying because I was learning and wasn't working with my back cleaning houses. I was working with my mind, and a good grade with comments on a paper was exhilarating. English courses were pure joy. I didn't know how to write but saw progress. I wanted all the feedback I could get and attended the Writing Center. From the challenge of writing an academic paper, through the chaos of words, to the revised presentation, writing satisfied something deep within me. It's something I did not share with my family; the joy of problem solving and creating was uniquely my own. The English teachers and Writing Center personnel treated me as an equal with genuine respect. They listened to my concerns and did not disdain my questions. One tutor suggested that I submit work to a local university's conference. Their comments, written and spoken, were life-giving fuel to my fire. As "mom," I encouraged others; I had never received the acknowledgement and specific encouragement these educators gave.

Computers, science, and math courses were another matter. Frustration ruled as I learned to work with a computer and the Internet. Often I rewrote papers from scratch because they mysteriously disappeared, and science courses seemed like endurance marathons. However, math was the real

problem. I didn't do math—I had never even helped my kids with their math homework. I tested into the gatekeeper course required for university entrance and should have stopped and taken a preparatory class but didn't. The stress was enormous, but it was through this class that I came to an understanding that changed my life in college.

That math class demanded change. I was dismayed when I headed to the last available seat in the classroom, for I would be sitting with the tattooed, pierced, spiked-hair young males at the back of the room. I remember noting, with silent laughter, the dismay on their faces when they saw a silver-haired, middle-aged, plump woman headed their way.

Studying was hard. I couldn't make the connections between the oral lecture, the text, and the problems. I haunted the math lab. I was falling behind. After the first test, two guys nearest me looked at me questioningly as they shared grades. I covered my paper and shook my head. I had a 27. The next test we commiserated with each other as I shared my almost passing grade. We were speaking now finding common things to talk about. I was over their outward appearance; they were over my silver hair.

I passed the third test in the seventies and knew I had a fighting chance with my homework grades and attendance. The fourth test was the clincher. The guys around me were worried, too. One day we were gathering our stuff after class when they turned to me and said, "Hey, lady." That was what they called me.

"Hey, Lady, how are you doing?"

“Not so good,” I replied.

“Yah, we noticed.”

They then said something that changed my life.

“Hey, Lady, us guys get together to study over at the coffee shop for pizza on Fridays. We wondered if you would like to join us. You know we learn better when we teach someone.”

I mumbled something through my tears and stood in the hallway as masses of young students from all walks of life flowed through the hallways. I had started school still in my role as an older woman from a suburban neighborhood. I hadn't accepted my role as a student—equal with all students. I left that classroom with a different perspective. The guys at the back of the room helped me make the transition to “student.” It was the first of many transitions—and the most important one.

I moved on to the University of Houston—Clear Lake and eventually to other colleges and degrees. However, the pattern for coping with change was laid at the community college. I found that although I wanted a degree, the change required in me cost more and took longer than I expected. I learned to make mistakes in public and not run away from embarrassing situations. I learned to release myself from my own and others' expectations—to live in practical reality and to forgive myself when I disappointed myself. I learned I could live through and move on in spite of chaotic situations at home and at school. My ducks never thought of being in a row. Most of all, I learned to redefine failure and success.

To the extent that I labeled myself a college dropout and a failure, I was one. To the extent that I agreed with other's negative opinions of me, I was trapped by them. I learned that any new endeavor is accompanied by scary, questionable outcomes. Expecting difficulty and doubt helped me cope with the sometimes devastating negative emotions that accompanied them. I learned that to risk failure as part of the process of change is not equivalent to living as a failure.

Stories have been essential to trusting the process of change. Stories are structured with someone or something owning a problem and trying to solve the problem while moving through obstacles to reach the outcome. Whether a folk story of "Jack" seeking his fortune and fighting a giant, a Bible story, a family story of immigration and loss, or personal stories of people coping with various situations—stories have fashioned my expectations. Obstacles and difficulties are not foreign to life but rather the stuff of life; it's in the grappling with them that we learn to live life and pass on our wisdom through experiences. I identified with the struggles in my own family: a mother with a 10th grade education learning to manage; a grandfather who worked twelve-hour days lugging beer to laborers and then attending night school; a grandmother who survived immigration only to have her parents and her adopted parents die, leaving her to work as a child. They learned to live in spite of life's challenges—I could too.

I've had to redefine success as I've journeyed through academia. Success cannot be defined only in terms of completing a degree. Success is incomplete without the degree to which people have been changed. Ken Bain,

author of *What the Best College Teachers Do*, notes that “the best teachers assume that learning has little meaning unless it produces a sustained and substantial influence on the way people think, act, and feel” (17). College is not a pass/fail evaluation. Academic knowledge and its measurement are only part of the journey. My college experience opened the door for me to envision myself as a professional—to do battle with myself and, despite the looming threat of fears and failures, force myself into uncomfortable new areas. Presenting papers, writing stories, teaching, and consulting are directly attributable to Bain’s “sustained and substantial” learning.

I still am challenged to cope with change despite past experiences. Doubts assail. Chaos threatens. Cancer challenges. In the process, I’m reminded that endeavors take longer and cost more than I expected. And I remember the stories—old and new—mine and others—and to look for the sustainable wisdom that empowers.

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Bain, Ken. *What the Best College Teachers Do*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2004.

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Appendix E

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household schedule helped me manage my time. Balancing football practice, drill team meetings, lamb care for Ag, church and household activities with a single car taught me to work with many demands on my time and to focus on essentials.

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