IDENTITY CHATS: CO-AUTHORIZED NARRATIVES AND THE PERFORMANCE OF WRITERLY SELVES IN MASS-MULTILITERATE TIMES

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ABSTRACT

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Inspired by my classroom experience and Deborah Brandt’s findings that generations of Americans were resistant to calling themselves “writer,” this multimodal dissertation focuses on the critical narratives, reading and writing artifacts, reflections, and theories of two primary co-researching-participants (CRPs) concerning the complicated and elusive identity of “writer” (Barthes; Foucault) and the not always complimentary relationship between definitions of writing in school, in popular culture and opinion, and in everyday practice (Brodkey; Prior).

I conducted two narrative case studies between December 2011 and May 2013 with two adolescents. In my study, I integrated methods from rhetoric, composition, and writing studies with a narrative inquiry methodology, building co-authorization into the research relationship and utilizing digital composing tools in order to disrupt the limitations and exclusivity of a traditionally single-authored and print-based space and in order to situate the stories of student writers at the center of my study. I also made use of a variety of dialogue-driven instruments: (1) oral histories and loosely-based interviews (Brandt; Selfe and Hawisher); (2) a writer’s questionnaire that asked CRPs to describe “writing,” the identity “writer,” and themselves as writers; (3) Joy Reid’s Perceptual Learning Styles Preference Questionnaire; (4) archives of CRPs’ print and digital reading and writing artifacts; (5) artifact-based interviews (Halbritter and Lindquist); and (6) text-based interviews (Roozen).

Each case study offers literacy researchers and scholars within rhetoric, composition, and writing studies a view of how a particular adolescent has come to call, see, and think of him or herself as or as not a writer. Working outwards from Roz Ivanič’s various modelings of writer
identity, in my conclusion, I offer my own framework and language for discussing and researching the self-identities of student writers.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my family and my partner, Nick Porter—I would be lost without your love, understanding, and support. I am also grateful for the time that I spent at St. Bonaventure University and particularly to Dr. Patrick Dooley who encouraged me to think of and see myself as an academic when a Ph.D. seemed out of reach and to Dr. Lauren Matz who encouraged me to seek out student voices in my research inquiries.

My project has developed in thanks to opportunities to talk with a variety of other inquirers, researchers, and everyday theorists, including: the Research Network Forum and the Qualitative Research Network at the Conference on College Composition and Communication and various meetings on and around the Bowling Green campus with Laural Adams, Megan Adams, Nick Baca, Estee Beck, Matt Bridgewater, Mariana Grohowski, Dave McClure, Kimberly Spallinger, Kellie Jean Sharp, Shirley Faulkner-Springfield, Scott Sundvall, and Alison Witte. I am thankful for old friends, like Katie Fredlund, a fellow Bonnie and New Yorker, who is a generous source of good advice and company, and for new friends, like Kerri Hauman, with whom and from whom I am grateful to have learned so much over the past four years.

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that would serve me well in this project. Kris Blair plays a central role as a sponsor in my own literate history, and I am ever thankful to her for equipping me (theoretically and pragmatically) to do digital writing research and to construct meaning using more than alphabetic text. Throughout this project she has challenged me to be a more thoughtful researcher and writer. Lastly, Lee Nickoson has been a more gracious advisor than one could ever wish for; words can neither express my gratitude to nor my respect for her. Her patience with my messy, slow but steady, re-writing processes and her gentle and yet firm advice have guided this project from an annotated bibliography and sketch of an idea in her summer 2010 Teacher Research seminar to its completion.

Most importantly, I am also indebted to Stewie Daniels, Mrs. Daniels, Corrinne Burns and their families for sharing their stories and their lives. They have taught me much about being a researcher, a teacher, and a human being.
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INTRODUCTION. CALLING, SEEING, AND THINKING OF STUDENTS AS WRITERS
(BECAUSE THEY ARE)

But I would insist that it’s a reasonable goal for my students to end up saying, “I feel like I am a writer: I get deep satisfaction from discovering meanings by writing—figuring out what I think and feel through putting down words; I naturally turn to writing when I am perplexed—even when I am just sad or happy; I love to explore and communicate with others through writing; writing is an important part of my life.”


I begin here by reflecting on how I became interested in writerly selves. I position myself as a teacher-researcher and this project as teacher-research (Ray), framing my study in terms of my classroom experiences, reflections, anecdotes, and informal findings because I believe there is value in the practice of theory, or, theorizing about the everyday, paying attention to and (re)presenting the small and big stories (Bamberg).

I came to understand the value of asking myself and my students to see, call, and think of themselves as writers during the spring semester of 2009 when I asked students in my Composition and Critical Thinking II course to collect and transcribe their everyday writing and spend time in class analyzing how their writing performed a variety of rhetorical selves across audiences, contexts, modes, and spaces. That semester, during large group reflections on intentionally being someone when writing, a student in the front row of one section of my first-year composition/writing (FYW) course identified herself as a novelist to the class, and in another section, a student in the back right-hand corner of the classroom identified himself as a poet. After class, I remember thinking it was curious that I had a student in my class calling herself a novelist. (I do not recall objecting to the male poet. As someone who had written poetry, my subjectivity seemed to make poet a more achievable literary identity for first-year
students, though I have never called myself one.) Even though I had initiated the
conversation/presentation, asking my students to see themselves and talk about themselves in
class and in writing as writers, to call themselves writers, I was uncomfortably jarred when they
actually did.

By the end of the semester, I began to seriously contemplate and question various
representations or treatments of everyday literacy practices as “crises” (largely driven by news-
based media outlets and popular opinion). However, I grew up communicating via dial up on
AIM (AOL Instant Messenger), Facebook was popularized when I was an undergraduate student
(as were laptops and wireless cards as opposed to Ethernet cables), and similarly, as a Master’s
student, though mobile phones were just beginning to emerge as networked mini-tablets, text
message usage had surpassed phone call usage in national polls (see table 1).

I also began to contemplate and question the various representations or treatments of the
writer that were bibliographically charted by publication date and “movement” into my brain
from reading lists, oral exams, and bluebook essays, the result of a traditional upbringing in
canonical medieval, renaissance, romantic, enlightenment, and modern English and American
literature. I began to wonder, for instance, how is my education, the source from which I draw
my authority to teach and assess first-year students’ writing and to decide if they can write in the
university or not, affecting the ways I read, comment on, value, and assess my students’ writing?
At this time, this authority was granted or signified by two degrees in literature. Thus, in short, I
started wondering how the world around me and my personal history positioned me within an
institution and perhaps made it difficult for me to readily accept that the eighteen-year-old
female student in the front of my classroom could call her writing novel-writing and could call
herself a novelist. I started wondering how my perception of writing and of writers impacted me as a writing teacher and by extension, my students.

Table 1

The Nielson Company’s Data on Phone Calls Versus Text Messages from January 2006 to June 2008

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Average Number of Monthly Calls</th>
<th>Average Number of Monthly Text Messages</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ctr 1, 2006</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 2, 2006</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 3, 2006</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 4, 2006</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 1, 2007</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 2, 2007</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 3, 2007</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 4, 2007</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 1, 2008</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr 2, 2008</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>357</td>
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</table>

Source: The Nielson Company; Newswire; Mobile; In U.S., SMS Text Messaging Tops Mobile Phone Calling; The Nielson Company, 22 Sept. 2008; Web; 13 May 2013.

I have realized that students’ calling themselves novelists is not a problem but that my thinking them not great enough or experienced enough to be novelists is. Bringing identity into the classroom—into the ways that we discuss what happens in learning, teaching, and writing contexts—allows for the kinds of plurality and instability that we readily admit as scholars who exist, for the majority of us, in academies influenced by the instability brought about by postmodernity. Additionally, neglecting to openly discuss identity in school and in writing classrooms takes for granted that everyone in the classroom is the same. It assumes all students
and their teachers come from the same place and are in any particular classroom with a unified set of goals, with equal access to that classroom and its values (Gee, *Social Linguistics*; Heath, *Ways*).

With this present project, I am still asking: How can the student in my class who openly identified as a novelist classify what she does as writing, herself as a writer? However, I am asking now not because I think it is ridiculous for an eighteen-year-old to call herself a novelist but because I know when she sees herself as a writer and when I “teach” her as a writer, she is open to learning how to be in writing and in the academy in ways that confront an autonomous model of literacy (and so am I) that asks us to forego the richness of dialects, of the personal, the local, and the experiential in favor of conformity. Uniformity and regularity should not and cannot be the goals of school or writing classrooms no matter how impressive the ideal standard might seem.

I realized my question about how students form self-identities as writers was incomplete a year after I had started a Ph.D. program, changed schools, and changed first-year composition curricula. As a non-graduate-student teaching writing the year before, I had been encouraged to take an active role in designing my course, creating assignments, and conducting teacher-research. A year later (2009), as a graduate student teaching writing (for the first time at a new institution), I was teaching with a programmatic syllabus rather than one I designed myself. I was also distributing assignments created with the help of programatically anthologized model examples. I did not find room in my new curriculum to plan a week and half of the semester where students broadly explored the textual traces of their writerly or rhetorical selves by working with a questionnaire designed by myself, a variety of their own texts, and their peers-as-colleagues. I realized how important doing something like that in class and with first-year
students was when a student dropped by my office. She told me: “I wanted to meet with you because I am really worried about your class. I’m not a writer; I’m just not, and I have to take this class, and I don’t want to fail.” Although we had not even gotten all the way through the syllabus—I had only seen it a few weeks before for myself—a student in my course felt that who she was (i.e., “not a writer”) meant she could not pass the course. She was not worrying about not getting an “A” on a paper or assignment or even challenging my perception and reading of her work. Before the semester even started, she was worrying about failing the whole course because she, who surely emailed, texted, and Facebooked, was not a writer. As Bronwyn Williams frames this issue in the “Introduction” to his 2006 edited collection *Identity Papers*, many people on college campuses “feel that they do not fit the images or the identities they have seen portrayed, and they feel their literacy practices are not what they should be even if they are not entirely sure why. Too often they blame themselves when the real conflict centers on questions of identity and institutional power” (1).

This dissertation, my study of the self-identities of two adolescent writers, reflects my growing concern as a college writing teacher as, semester after semester, students in my classrooms express a sense of anxiety about my writing courses and often attribute this anxiety to the fact that they do not think of themselves as writers. There is something blatantly oxymoronic about the fact that my students are telling me they do not see themselves as writers when they are producing textual discourse (or writing) in more sustained ways than anyone before them in the history of popular communication. Again, since 2008, national communications polls have reported that text messages surpass phone calls as the preferred means of communication (see table 1), and according to a 2010 post on *Social Media Today*, about 41.6% of people in the United States of America had a Facebook account (Wells).
While students are skilled writers in communities that extend far beyond the classroom and even school (and some, believe it or not, with stakes just as high as if not higher than school), these students, their parents, and their teachers (myself included in a not-so-distant past) are not always valuing these forms of writing as writing and, thus, neither are they considering themselves and others who engage in these practices as writers. Literacy researchers James Collins and Richard K. Blot urge scholars to treat seriously complacency in identity (de)constructions: “Discomfort with the self, who we are and where we are from, may be a common human predicament, but that should not blind us to variation in the severity and consequences of this self-estrangement, nor the historical specificities contributed by one’s class, gender, and race to the tribulations of the self” (119).

In developing my dissertation project, I reflected on the novelist and the poet in my previous classrooms and I wished I knew how they had developed the authority to take on identities, publicly, as writers— I wished I had asked. In developing my dissertation project, I have also reflected on that particular student’s question, wondering, how can she not have anxiety toward and ultimately pass my introduction to academic writing course if she is not a writer (or is a writing-non-writer)? Pondering such questions led to others, like: “How do I address a student concern when it is a matter of identity, when a student is anxious about my class because of how she sees herself?” and “How did this student come to see herself as a writing-non-writer?” Taking on the role of researcher outside of the classroom in the context of my dissertation project has afforded me the opportunity to ask the questions and to collect the data I wish I had had the foresight to ask of and ask from the self-identified “writers” and “non-writers” in my previous classrooms.
Chapter Outlines

Chapters 1–3 provide the historical, terminological, theoretical, and methodological frameworks of my study while chapters 4 and 5 are separate narrative case study investigations (see Appendix A for Human Subject Review Board Approval Documents). In chapter 1, I situate writing-non-writers as a historical and contemporary American phenomenon that first surfaced as an issue of educational philosophy in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s 1837 address “The American Scholar.” I also briefly introduce my study and research participants—who at certain points in the project (which I emphasize throughout chapters 4 and 5) participated as “subjects,” “co-researchers,” and collaborative authors/writers; thus, I refer to them in the project as co-researching-participants (CRPs). In chapter 2, I address my use of complex terms (like literacy, writing, identity, self-identity), spending time with Roz Ivanič’s evolving theory and diagrammatic modeling of writer identity (1998–2010), and outlining the goals of my project. Similarly, in chapter 3, I address my adoption of an interdisciplinary narrative methodology and mixed methods of data collection, analysis, and re-presentation.

Chapter 4 details the writing life of 14-year-old Stwie Daniels (pseudonym). His 51-year-old mother, Mrs. Daniels (pseudonym), played a key role in this case study—providing anecdotes and context, for instance, that explained why Stwie talked about writing based on his experiences in school and with particular teachers. Chapter 4 focuses on how Stwie theorizes writing as an embodied practice. It also features painstakingly crafted visual narratives presented as animations via Microsoft PowerPoint. I use video to present such artifacts and their accompanying narratives as a way to demonstrate the writer identity—though he does not claim the identity writer himself—that Stwie performs in his everyday life and on his own terms. Finally, the chapter concludes by bringing together the experiences that led Stwie to theorize...
writing as subjective and embodied and his categorization of artifacts in order to understand why he describes himself as someone who writes, or types, but not as a writer.

Chapter 5 details the writing life of 17-year-old co-researching-participant Corrinne Marie Burns or Enni C. Leowly. While the co-researching-participant behind this writer identity is a 17-year-old female living in a small town in the Midwest, Enni C. Leowly, the penname and persona that Corrinne writes under, is 22, a resident of the very metropolitan New York City. Chapter 5 focuses on how Corrinne came to develop her richly imagined writer identity.

Corrinne identifies as a writer, and a large part of this identity is supported by her participation in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo)—she is a writer of fictional novels. Corrinne’s case study emphasizes, (1) the importance of family-engaged literacy and identity sponsorship, (2) the importance of writing communities, and (3) her resolve that writing must be taught as more than a formula in order for writing students to be able to make themselves part of the equation. Finally, in chapter 6, I discuss the limitations of my study, findings, and conclude the dissertation by considering the pedagogical implications of my study.
CHAPTER 1. ON WRITING-NON-WRITERS (PEOPLE WHO WRITE BUT DO NOT CALL THEMSELVES WRITERS)

Literacy among U.S. citizenry has been underestimated by standardized tests and other narrow, usually school-based measurements that miss the meanings and forms of literacy in everyday life.


When I picture writing, I often see a solitary writer alone in a cold garret working into the small hours of the morning by the thin light of a candle. It seems a curious image to conjure, for I am absent from this scene in which the writer is an Author and the writing is Literature. In fact it is not my scene at all. The writer-writes-alone is a familiar icon in art and is perhaps most readily understood as a romantic representation of the production of canonical literature, music, painting, sculpture. And if the icon evokes in me and others an awe out of proportion to its content (it is after all also an image of economic, emotional, and social deprivation), that is probably because we have learned that we are to complete this scene not by projecting ourselves onto the image of the writer, but by assuming the role of reader. Even so, the scene of writing is a text many of us find ourselves reading when we think about writing or, worse, when we are in the very act of writing.


I teach and study rhetoric and writing, and in doing so, I have met more people who do not think of themselves as writers than who do—even though we are all writing all of the time. This has struck and still does strike me as curious—why does one person, with complete confidence, claim the identity “writer” while another person, who in many cases does the same activities, does not? Even as “writing” is a commonplace activity, “writer” seems to be a restricted identity. Everyday writing practices have continuously evolved and will continue to do so at what seems to be an increasingly rapid pace. At the same time, so too have people’s prejudices against seeing/understanding/valuing everything as writing and seeing/understanding/valuing themselves as writers; so too has public resistance to a plurality of everyday uses and practices of language; and so too have the cultural apparatuses and institutional instruments that aim to devalue and limit their economic, political, and social
agencies. Writing-non-writers are not simply a matter of situated self-identity, the particular angle from which I investigate this phenomenon in narrative case studies, or chapters 4 and 5. Writing-non-writers are also an ideological matter; thus, in this chapter I discuss the broader cultural, scholarly, and theoretical conversations that preface and are inevitably embedded within my situated investigations of the self-identities of two individuals.

Chapter Outline

In this chapter, I frame writing-non-writers as a cultural phenomenon, situating this phenomenon within the United States using the work of Deborah Brandt, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Linda Brodkey, and various media reports on “Why Johnny/Jenny Cannot Write.” Doing so, I hope to situate the question of writer identity as an inquiry that is complexly cultural, economic, educational, historical, ideological, and philosophical.

As a conversation of “the writer” evokes conversations about “the author”—something the opening epigraph from Linda Brodkey’s “Modernism and the Scene of Writing” eloquently captures—I also briefly attend to French theorists Roland Barthes’s and Michele Foucault’s respective essays concerning “the author.” However, as both men set as their goal to theoretically disperse any trace of the body, the individual person who created a text, from the text, I also turn to Molly Nesbit’s 1987 article in *Yale French Studies* that addresses the philosophy of French law concerning the author.

Finally, I map the research questions that underlie my studies of the self-identities of two particular adolescents, Stewie Daniels and Corrinne Burns. I also introduce co-researching-participants (Stewie, his mother, and Corrinne), making space for their own written explanations of their motivations for joining the study. Before moving on in chapter 2 to map out my own
conceptual understanding of terms like writing, I conclude with Stewie’s, Mrs. Daniels’, and Corrinne’s perspectives on or definitions of writing and writers.

**The Problem of Writing-Non-Writers: American Sponsors**

Writing-non-writers are addressed or brought to literacy researchers’ attention, though briefly and without this phrasing, in Deborah Brandt’s study of literacy in American lives and subsequent 2001 book by that title and also in *Literacy and Learning*, her 2009 reflection on both that was inspired by her 2003 receipt of the Grawemeyer Award in Education. Though my initial interest in writing-non-writers and the self-identities of student writers was sparked by small stories, unquantifiable personal experience, Brandt’s work confirms that writing-non-writers are an historical and ongoing cultural phenomenon.

Of the many critical insights about literacy in American lives Brandt’s work provides, a theme that emerged from her data was that “the identity ‘writer’” did not “seem as easily available as the identity ‘reader’” (*Literacy and Learning* 105). She explains, “there was reticence among the people I spoke with—including a well-established, published poet—to regard themselves as writer despite the obvious avidity of their pursuit of writing” (*Literacy and Learning* 103). Further, she contextualizes this with two specific examples:

(1) Benjamin Lucas, a writer and critic, who articulated that he has no “sense of himself as a writer” (*Literacy and Learning* 103).

(2) Bernice King, a retired phone operator and writer of fiction, poetry, and short stories, who, when asked by Brandt “how she began to develop an identity as a writer,” responded, “I don’t think I ever thought about it” (*Literacy and Learning* 103).
Brandt’s primary goal in these projects was to explain the ways in which economic transformations have influenced people’s lives through their “felt” contacts with literacy in everyday life at home and in school, so each book devotes only about a page or so to these writing-non-writers. Though, even still, Brandt connects her anecdotes about Benjamin Lucas and Bernice King with another of her findings, that writer was a negatively stereotyped identity within American families and homes. For instance, Brandt explains, “writing does not seem to be broadly sponsored and endorsed by parents” (Literacy and Learning 105), and she found that not only did parents have “hands-off attitudes toward children’s writing development” but also that “negative stereotypes of the creative writer sometimes translated into active or at least passive discouragement of an offspring’s literacy pursuits” (Literacy and Learning 102). However, “writer,” as an identity (broadly speaking) and as a self-identity (specifically speaking), is discouraged not just in American homes but also historically (and presently) by pedagogical or philosophical socio-cultural contexts.

History: The Student-Writer as Bookworm

In 1837, Ralph Waldo Emerson delivered his well-known address “The American Scholar” to Phi Beta Kappa in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Emerson has been anthologized in collections of American Literature as a prominent American Romantic or Naturalist thinker, and “The American Scholar” has been anthologized as representative of Emerson’s philosophy of self-reliance. Emerson’s lecture evokes the opening excerpt from Brodkey, who reflects that when she sits down to write, she is blocked from writing not because she is envisioning a hostile audience (something Peter Elbow has reflected on) but because she cannot imagine anything except all of the authors or great literature she has been schooled to iconize. As Emerson articulated in 1837, “Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the
views, which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these books” (15).

Scholars have argued that Emerson’s “American Scholar” be read as a pedagogical text (Bickman; Sacks). For example, Emerson argued that if the purpose of education turned largely to mechanical skill, that education would produce “parrot[s] of other men’s thinking” (12). He also argued that colleges “have their indispensable office, —to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create,” and he warned listeners, “Forget this, and our American colleges will recede in their public importance, whilst they grow richer every year” (17). Kenneth Sacks explains the historical and pedagogical significance of Emerson’s lecture:

Beyond an expression of individual idealism, Emerson’s remarkable oration represents perhaps the first instance in American academic debate intended also for public consideration . . . Emerson held Harvard, the nation’s oldest and richest college, not to the standard of confirming values, but to that of investigating them . . . He demanded that Harvard live up to itself, and he made that demand in front of everyone who counted. (3)

I argue that Emerson’s address articulates the need for and experiential or active writing pedagogy (as opposed to a reading pedagogy). In many ways, Emerson seems to hypothesize that canonization, mechanization, and standardization within the academy would affect writers, perhaps even that such practices would result in writing-non-writers. Thus, “The American Scholar” is an important starting point for understanding writing-non-writers as a cultural phenomenon promoted by American systems of education and institutions of higher learning.
Importantly, Emerson delivered his address on the cusp of broad changes in America’s economic and educational contexts. By the end of the 19th century, colleges and universities had to account for more students coming from new public schools (like the Normal Schools of Emerson’s educational adversary, Horace Mann) and the fact that the majority of adolescents’ and young adults’ futures and survivals shifted from acquired and familial agricultural skills to learned and institutional certifiable/school skills. To do so, colleges and universities did, indeed, turn to standardization and mechanization, principles of the emerging industrial organization of society. James Berlin characterizes this period in *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* as “The fall from grace of the college rhetoric course” (24). Berlin argued that in addition to other factors, “the new public high school” and college entrance exams—which at Harvard by 1874 had begun to include “a test of the student’s ability to write in English” (23)—“all played a part in changing the nature of writing instruction in colleges” (24). Berlin further explained that significance of the entrance exam’s inclusion of writing: “establishing the entrance test in composition suggested that the ability to write was something that the college student ought to bring with him from his preparatory school, a place which was more and more likely to be one of the new public high schools that were appearing everywhere” (23). Thus, again, “The American Scholar” is a critical point in the American cultural narrative of writing-non-writers.

*Culture: Everyday Writing as Literacy Crisis*

In addition to formal learning and what happens in schools, literacy crises discussed in Academia and also in the popular American news media help to perpetuate the notion that mechanization and standardization are productive and positive educational ideals (which, as explained earlier, maintain exclusive scenes of writing and, thus, a restricting identity for “the
writer”). For example, the first college entrance exam was instituted in 1874 and was put into practice in response to a literacy crisis (Connors 48). As a contemporary example, there is the current “crisis” we supposedly find ourselves in where we imagine that text messaging is destroying language (see for instance, ScienceDaily’s August 2012 “No LOL Matter: Tween Texting May Lead to Poor Grammar Skills”).

Although Emerson laments in 1837, “instead of [Wo]Man Thinking, we have the bookworm” (15), Newsweek’s oft cited 1975 “Why Johnny Can’t Write” laments exactly the opposite almost a full century later. For instance, the newspaper article argues that Johnny cannot write because he is not reading the classics: “Writing is, after all, book-talks,” says Dr. Ramon Veal, associate professor of language education at the University of Georgia's College of Education. “You learn book-talk only by reading” (qtd. in Sheils 25). Emerson, on the other hand, argued that writing is life-talk: “[l]ife lies behind us as a quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of to-day. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-year made” (19). Instead of Emerson’s argument that young American scholars should move away from the dusty library shelves to experience, to create, Merrill Sheils of Newsweek argued: “If the written language is placed at the mercy of every new colloquialism and if every fresh dialect demands and gets equal sway, then we will soon find ourselves back in Babel. In America today . . . there are too many people intent on being masters of their language and too few willing to be its servants” (25).

A variety of scholars have challenged the oppression of Jenny’s/Johnny’s everyday literate practices. For example, having reviewed early literacy research (up until the 1990s), Brandt explained that scholars had indeed “chronicle[d] the diversity of literacy practices among ordinary people” (Literacy in American 7), and interdisciplinary literacy scholars continue to do
so (Hull and Schultz; Lam; Schultz; Roozen; Voss). However, there have also been several media and academic reincarnations of “Why Johnny Can’t Write,” and they continue to move further away from Emerson’s suggestion that we focus not on what students should be reading or writing or how they are reading or writing but, instead, encourage them to actually write, where writing is neither imitation nor mechanical skill.

As Suzette Haden Elgin articulated in 1976: “The problem with taking on something like this Newsweek article is that you are taking on the Hydra. Every time you lop off the head of any one misstatement, five more rise to confront you. Every time you clarify one misunderstanding, you discover that you have left half a dozen others unexplored” (35). Even as researchers and education advocates seek to circumvent the devaluing of everyday literate activities, the argument that students are not reading the right things the right ways or are not writing the right things the right ways is always evolving. This argument, as Elgin suggests, is seemingly regenerative. With every new reading and writing practice that is introduced by technological advancements that increase access, which allow greater and more diverse participation in such practices, there sprout up even more arguments that seek to discredit and devalue such participation instead of celebrating the ways youth are taking up literate practices and making them their own. Take, for instance, Nicholas Carr’s “Is Google Making Us Stupid” that appeared in The Atlantic in 2008.

Present Day: The Student-Writer as Parrot

Whereas Emerson framed the anti-American scholar as a student who was a parrot of other men’s thoughts, at present, large studies of writing report that writing is often mechanized within American classrooms precisely as a means for students to parrot other people’s thinking, which Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer call “writing without composing.” For example, as
part of *The National Study of Writing Instruction*, Applebee and Langer found: “Of the 8,542 separate assignments we gathered . . . only 19% represented extended writing of a paragraph or more; all the rest consisted of fill in the blank and short answer exercises, and copying of information directly from the presentations—types of activities that are best described as writing without composing” (15). Applebee and Langer further describe the current state of writing in most American classrooms, more directly evoking Emerson’s anti-American scholar, the parrot:

> [T]he actual writing that goes on in typical classrooms across the United States remains dominated by tasks in which the teacher does all the composing, and students are left only to fill in missing information, whether copying directly from a teacher’s presentation, completing worksheets and chapter summaries, replicating highly formulaic essay structures keyed to the high-stakes tests they will be taking, or writing the particular information the teacher is seeking. Given the constraints imposed by high-stakes tests, writing as a way to study, learn, and go beyond—as a way to construct knowledge or generate new networks of understandings—is rare. (26)

Thus, in the context of Deborah Brandt’s analysis of the felt dimensions of literacy on lives across American generations of families, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s predictions about canonization and mechanization, Linda Brodkey’s reflection on the modernist scene of writing, popular news media’s evolving accusations about new forms of communications eroding the sanctity of language, and Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer’s findings concerning writing as an activity across American classrooms, writing-non-writers emerges as an American phenomenon that is well-sponsored (Brandt) by American families, homes, schools, and popular media like blogs and newspapers.
My concern, an eminent concern for rhetoric, composition, and writing studies (RCW), is that the majority of people do not say, “I’m not a writer, I’m a _____.” Many stop at “I’m not a writer.” This is not resistance. This is not people liberating themselves from an identity that has historically been privileged and limited—even strictly white and male in a not-so-distant past—in favor of creating a new, more equitable and open identity. Frederick Douglass has reminded us that liberty means a person “can write, and speak, and cooperate for the attainment of his rights and the redress of his wrongs” (185), and it is within this context that Brandt frames literacy teaching and learning: “As democratic institutions, schools are supposed to exist to offset imbalances that market philosophy helps to create—including, especially, imbalances in the worth of people’s literacy. The more the school organizes literacy teaching and learning to serve the needs of the economic system, the more it betrays its democratic possibilities” (Literacy and Learning 188). My worry is that writing non-writers have somehow been conditioned to unquestioningly forfeit their authority and agency, their own abilities to assert what writing is and who writers are, and I worry particularly that an important component of this conditioning happens based on how reading and writing are taught/used and assessed/valued across curricula and classrooms.

The French Dispersal of the Writer

Inevitably, studying how people come to call themselves (or not) writers, evokes philosophical questions about what an artist is, what an author is, what a creator is, and what a writer is. Two of the most significant texts that come to mind are perhaps Roland Barthes’s 1968 essay, “The Death of the Author,” and Michel Foucault’s 1969 essay and lecture, “What is an Author?” In many ways, Barthes and Foucault, well over a century after “The American
Scholar” (1837), react against a Romantic notion or asocial understanding of the author (what Barthes calls the Author-God). Although James Berlin has called attention to “Emerson’s effort to create a romantic rhetoric that, despite its emphasis on the individual, is social and democratic, combining the comprehensiveness of Aristotelian rhetoric with post-Kantian epistemology” (*Writing Instruction* 42), Emerson did, at times, forward a view of the writer as asocial, as internally inspired genius.

For example, although Emerson argued against conformity as the purpose of education and also emphasized and recognized the importance of original and creative compositions, he also advanced an asocial or internal understanding, rather than social understanding, of original and/or creative compositions. As an example of how he advanced this asocial notion, I offer the following line from his 1837 address: “There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words; manners, actions, words, that is, indicative of no custom or authority, but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair” (15). Barthes directly challenges this understanding of creativity and originality in “The Death of the Author,” writing, for example: “We know now that a text consists not of a line of words, releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God), but of multi-dimensional space in which are married and contested several writings, none of which is original: the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture” (52–53). Similarly, in “What is an Author” Foucault, like Brodkey, laments the mythological status given to authorship: “We are used to thinking that the author is so different from all other men” (118) and, like Barthes, he argues that there is no author, rather, there is an “author function”: “he [the author] is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses” (119).
Barthes and Foucault, in recognizing and arguing for the social nature of language, incidentally highlight a problematic element in Emerson’s ideal philosophy of the American Scholar. Although Emerson detested statues along with literary cannons, to argue that writing bursts forth from an individual’s tabula rasa-like mind sets writers up to be canonized and memorialized, to be held apart and made distinct from all other wo/men. In essence, Barthes and Foucault theorized into existence the social nature of the author and thus also the social nature of writer identity (i.e., they made the identity of the writer of any text cultural, historical, and multiple). However, at the same time, they denied the body, the individual who actually created the text. As Molly Nesbit characterized the effects of their work (and others’) in her 1987 *Yale French Studies* article, “The French definition of the author has gone vague: the author is a general case, an orphan, some say corpse. It is a definition too diffuse to be useful; worse, it strips the author of distinction” (229). Nesbit also further pointed out that by 1987, the French definition of the author needed to account for more than authors of writing: “As if in flight from such a fate, lately French authors have become authors by doing other things besides write; they make music, psychoanalysis, Sartes, maps . . . Those who go looking for authors must devise the means by which to recognize not only the worker but the work . . . ” (229).

Whereas Nesbit looks to the law (rather than French Theory) as “a more reliable standard of measurement” (230) for the author, in the context of my own study, in chapters 2 and 3, I discuss in detail how I conceptually and methodologically negotiate studying writer as socially constructed/constructing and as a self-constructed/constructing identity, positioning writing as “wrighting” (Ivanič and Burgess) and as “literate activity” (Prior). In my study, I welcome intertextuality. As Bazerman has surmised, “We create our texts out of the sea of former texts that surround us, the sea of language we live in. And we understand the texts of others within
that same sea” (“Intertextuality” 83–84). Yet at the same time, I do not characterize intertextuality as the death of the author or the complete dispersal of the author; it is simply the plurification of the author, or, the recognition of writer identity as a complex discoursal construction with both social and personal dimensions. The “sea of words” that Bazerman recognizes as the collaborative or networked authors of texts (“Intertextuality” 84) recognizes the social dimensions of writer identity, the autobiographically constructed, biographically constructed, politically constructed, socially constructed, textually constructed, and so on and so forth, writer(s).

The Study

My dissertation poses and attempts to answer interrelated clusters of questions to address what Brandt refers to in her text as “reticence” and what I refer to as the American cultural phenomenon of writing-non-writers. I am interested in how and why some people come to call, see, and think of themselves as writers and how and why other people do not or intentionally resist doing so, etc. In essence, I am concerned with how and why people construct, deconstruct, and/or resist developing self-identities as writers.

Deborah Brandt’s study was much larger than mine; for instance, she collected narratives from 80 people, ages 10-95. Her study was also much different than mine; whereas I am very much concerned with re-presenting the personal, Brandt spent six years using grounded theory to “pulverize” the personal out of her remix of or narrative of other people’s narratives. In her own words, “I try to empty them of their personal significance and understand their historical significance” (“The Politics” 44). However, Brandt’s “ultra-objective” approach to a comprehensive study of American life uncovered a largely uninvestigated cultural pattern:
people who wrote, even people who were published and who wrote for a living, had difficulty
describing themselves as writers and their self-developments as people who specialize in
particular genres of writing. This is significant because it emphasizes that researchers do not
know how people develop self-identities as writers or how people come to call, see, and think of
themselves as writers (or not call, see, and think of themselves as writers).

A first step in this direction, then, is a more focused attempt to gather personal histories
of how people come or do not come to call, see, and think of themselves as writers. This is what
my dissertation attempts to do by sharing narrative case studies that re-present how 14-year-old
Stewie Daniels (a writing-non-writer) and 17-year-old Corrinne Burns (a self-identified writer)
came to define writing and writers, and in turn themselves as a writing-non-writer and a writer.
At the outset, I admit our collective whiteness, our “mainstreamer-ness” (Heath), in an attempt to
remind readers that the theories of writer identity and versions of writerly selves re-presented
here are a few of many possible theories and versions, and that matters of writer identity are not
just raced or classed or gendered, they are all of these things and more.

As a way of introducing my study, I have charted the questions (see fig. 1.1) that arose as
I developed and implemented my inquiry into writer as a self-identity in the lives of these two
individual students (one male, one female, both “adolescent,” white, Christian, and middle class
with educated and successful parents and siblings). Each question I outline pooled outward from
my initial teacher-researcher interest, “how did first-year composition students come to call, see,
and think of themselves as or as not writers?” and multiplied generously thereafter.
My Starting Question: How do people come to self-identify or not as writers?

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<th>Theoretical and Methodological Textures</th>
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<tr>
<td>What is self-identity?</td>
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<td>Conceptually, what is the self- or autobiographical identity of the writer?</td>
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<td>How can the self- or autobiographical identity of the writer be “exposed” and “studied?”</td>
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<th>Personal Textures</th>
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<td>What kinds of texts do people point to as representative of their autobiographical selves as writers? What do student performances of identities as writers—on their own terms—look like? What texts do and do not re-present student self-identities as writers and why or why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What inspires people to write?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does what people think writing is and who they think writers are influence their processes of and attitudes toward constructing writerly selves?</td>
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Necessary Preliminary Questions: (1) What is writing in the contexts of individuals’ lives? And (2) Who are writers in the contexts of individuals’ lives?

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<th>Ideological or Political Textures</th>
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<td>Who or what decides what counts or not as writing and who counts or not as a writer?</td>
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<td>Via Brandt, who or what benefits from exercising power over how writing and writers are defined, recognized, and valued?</td>
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<td>How do these forces benefit and at what expense?</td>
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<td>Pragmatically, how is this “decision” executed and integrated into institutions and shared cultural memory?</td>
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<td>What kinds of writing and writers are left out or marginalized and how?</td>
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<th>Personal Textures</th>
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<td>How is this institutionalization and integration of controlled perceptions of writing and writers felt or experienced and/or resisted by individual people?</td>
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| Are people conscious already and/or can they become conscious of this institutionalization and integration in reflective spoken and written dialogue? What do people, not just academics or researchers or theorists or media outlets, have to say about and what have they
observed about language, learning, literacy, identity, and writing?
- What, where, and why do non-academic people who write as a part of their daily lives—perhaps as hobbyists, perhaps as fans, perhaps to pass the time, perhaps to communicate—write? What inspires people to write? And which of these practices do they count as “writing,” and in which of these practices (if any) do they picture themselves as “writers?”
- What, who, where, and why do non-academic people who read as a part of their daily lives, read? And, which kinds of texts do they count as “writing,” which kinds of authors/artists do they count as “writers?”
- How do reading and writing interact in an individual’s experiential and conceptual constructions of writing and writers?
- How do non-academic people who write and read as a part of their daily lives define writing?
- How do people develop definitions or perceptions of writing; what has influenced the ways that they determine what counts/qualifies or not as writing; where and how was this influence experienced?
- How does all of this impact a student’s (desire)ability to see, call, and think of herself as writer?

Fig. 1.1. Chart of My Clustered Research Questions

To address these questions (and some better than others, which is a matter I take up in chapter 6, my conclusion), I spent thirteen months working with (and still keep in contact with) Stewie Daniels and his mother, both who do not self-identify as writers and also, separately, with Corrinne Marie Burns, who does self-identify as a writer and has created a penname and persona around and in support of her writer identity.

Co-Researching-Participants: Background

In December 2011, I started meeting with a 14-year-old middle schooler named Stewie and his 51-year-old mother, Mrs. Daniels, for hour-long interviews and meetings once or twice a month. I recruited Stewie and Mrs. Daniels through word-of-mouth conversation about my study. An English professor in my department, who was also a family friend of the Daniels’ and knew Stewie was typing a Star Wars inspired novel on his iPod Touch (when he was supposed to
be asleep), had heard about my project and relayed the details of my study to Stewie and Mrs. Daniels, who encouraged the professor to have me contact them. Although Stewie was the primary co-researching-participant, Mrs. Daniels also participated in the study as a co-researching-participant who shared additional anecdotes about, context(s) of, and details concerning Stewie’s anecdotes, artifacts, experiences, narrative, texts, and theories.

In January 2012, I began meeting with Corrinne Marie Burns, a 17-year old high school student enrolled in all college classes. I recruited Corrinne by blanket emailing all of the students at Bowling Green State University who were high school students enrolled in University-level writing courses. Although I had three students contact me, Corrinne was the only student who followed through and made an appointment to meet face-to-face to discuss her participation.

Co-Researching-Participants: Positioning and Views on Writers and Writing

Stewie considers himself as someone who writes—mostly someone who types—but not a writer because he is not published and cannot envision himself making a living from writing in the future. Mrs. Daniels also does not consider herself or anyone else a writer unless they are published, and she does not consider the writing she does as “writing” because no one is forcing her to do it. Corrinne, an energetic National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) participant, considers herself a writer and has developed and continues to develop a robust (future) self-identity as a writer around her (present) penname, Enni C. Leowly.

Stewie explained that he joined the study “to be nice.” He understood the research project to be about him and his writing and described his role in the project pragmatically: “I am the person that Stacy gets the writing information from as well as opinions.” To Stewie, “writing is something that you do with, something that you do to get a story, or information out through
something else but words” and someone who writes is someone “who writes books”: “Book-writers are the types of people who are writers.”

Mrs. Daniels also thought of writers exclusively as people who were published. While she was not clear about what motivated her to give her permission for her son to join the study or about her own motivation to participate, a written response she provided via email when I asked her to offer some background about her relationship with writing and the identity writer suggests her interest:

Writing no matter what method I choose to use writing is something I have always been fearful to share with others. I enjoy writing very much and do it often, but most of my writing has been thrown, erased or deleted. From the time I was young, I would write letters to my cousin or friends that lived far away and I almost always ended up throwing them out instead of sending them. I do the same with thank-you notes. Just last year I wrote an email to my son’s teacher praising her on the good teaching job, but it never got sent. It sat in my drafts for a while then…delete! I think this is why I’m so happy both of my children enjoy writing and I always encourage them to share it.

I wish I knew why I have this fear of sharing my writings. It just seems so permanent. Once you write it and share it, it’s out there forever!

Corrinne explained that while she was, at first, tentative to join the project, she was too interested in talking about writing with someone to resist:

I am actually surprised to be a part of this study. I’m not usually the sort of person that responds to e-mails from strangers. Occasionally, I still say I have to meet my murderer in reference to meeting with Stacy as that was my first response when I
received an email from a stranger asking if I'd be interested. However, there is never a time when I'm not interested in talking about writing. I started writing my first “novel” when I was 9. So, murdering stranger or not, I agreed to participate in this study to make my mark on the writing world.

She suggested an alternate title for the project that indicates what she understood our research together to be about: “This project, to me, should be called ‘Why isn't everyone a writer? A Discussion of Approaches to Writing and a Multitude of Rants.’” For her, I wanted to know why everyone was not a writer, my research methods both for data collection and data representation were dialogic, and our research dialogue spiraled as topics of passion and personal investment came up in our talk about learning, writing, and writers.

Creative and intentional in her approach to developing a writer identity, when I asked Corrinne to email me, along with a “positioning statement” about her motives for joining the study, a description of writing and writers to include in my framework chapters, her descriptions begin “impressing” (Goffman) her writer identity as a fiction writer: “Writing is magic. It's communication, happiness, and wisdom all bundled into one. Really, it's letters put together to make words and words to make sentences. Writers are the people that put the words into cauldrons and make potions out of them. Anyone can do it, you just—like magic—have to believe.”

Conclusion

In the introduction, I discussed my own motivations for designing and implementing a study of writer as a self-identity by examining individuals’ artifactual, dialogic, and narrative literate histories. In this chapter, I have begun to historically situate writing-non-writers and
writer identity within scholarly literature. I have outlined my research questions, those I attend to and those that, for now, I simply acknowledge, and I have also shared co-researching-participants’ articulations of their motivations for joining the study and their definitions of writing and writers. In chapter 2, I continue situating my research inquiry, reviewing the scholarly conversations out of which my own definitions or conceptualizations of literacy, writing, and identity grew. Similarly, before transitioning into narrative case study reports in chapters 4 and 5, in chapter 3, I take the opportunity to specify the approaches I took to collecting, analyzing, and reporting data and their respective scholarly influences.
CHAPTER 2. WRITER IDENTITY VERSUS WRITERLY SELVES: FOUNDATIONS AND FRAMEWORKS

How student writers think of their own rhetorical voices (or whatever they call it), seems to me valuable and understudied.

- Richard Haswell, posted via the Writing Program Administrator’s Listserv, 11 Nov. 2011.

Nowhere in North’s account is the woman herself allowed to speak. We simply do not know what she would say if she could tell the story for herself . . . Hers is an untold story, a story we’re not permitted to hear, an ‘other’ perspective we’re not allowed to share.


My study employs a variety of disputed terms: identity, literacy, self, writing. In this chapter, I outline the scholarly origins of or conversations that negotiate my use of such disputed terms. For example, I acknowledge the problematics of a term like “literacy” and situate my use of the term within the work of New Literacy Studies and the various conversations and subsequent theories of literacy that Shirley Brice Heath’s ethnographic work and Brian Street’s ideological model of literacy have inspired. Similarly, I ask that readers accept my own use of the term “writing” to refer to what Roz Ivanič calls wrighting and what Paul Prior frames as literate activity, and I also trace the scholarly conversations that inform my use of the words identity and self-identity.

To contextualize my use of “writer identity” and self-identity as a micro dimension of writer identity, I also offer readers what is a concise but rudimentary overview of Roz Ivanič’s single-authored and collaborative work conceptualizing, modeling, and theorizing writer identity and the discoursal construction of identity in academic writing. Although a variety of scholars within RCW have taken up identity or self in their studies of writing and students, Ivanič’s work
explicitly aims to conceptualize writer identity (as Paul Prior’s has literate activity); thus, I draw on her language and rely on her scholarship throughout my dissertation.

I also briefly review how Ivanič’s work has directly been taken up by a variety of scholars in their studies of writer identity. My brief reviews of scholarship citing Ivanič’s model of writer identity confirms, as Brandt’s work suggested, that the self-identities of student writers are an underexplored area within research on writing. Similarly, as the excerpts from Richard Haswell and Patricia Sullivan that open this chapter imply, my reviews also suggest that missing from such scholarly conversations are the literal voices of students, particularly the voices of students who are also adolescents. Thus, I conclude the chapter by articulating my project’s goals in relation to such opportunities for further research.

**Literacy**

I intentionally situate my study of the self-identities of adolescent writers as literacy research even though literacy is a problematic term (Ulmer; Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola). Self-described ethnographic literacy research beginning in the early 1980s (Heath; Street), continuing throughout the 1990s (Brandt), and on into the present day (Selfe and Hawisher) has deconstructed a variety of binaries that I sought to avoid re-building or maintaining in my own study—singular vs. plural; spoken vs. written; literate vs. illiterate; private vs. public; in-school vs. out-of-school; online vs. offline; etc. To demonstrate how literacy researchers have problematized and continue to problematize the term literacy, I briefly review particular frameworks of literacy that inform the way(s) I conceptualize the term literacy in my study.
Brian Street, *From an Autonomous to an Ideological Model of Literacy*

In his 1984 manuscript, Street, working off of social historian Harvey J. Graff’s critique of an autonomous literacy model as “part of the attempt by ruling groups to assert social control over the potentially disruptive lower orders,” urges scholars to avoid limiting depictions of literacy by forming what he called an ideological model of literacy (11). His ideological model conceptualized literacy as plural and “embedded in a multiplicity of social practices rather than as a monolithic technology or tradition” (Collins and Blot 60). Thus, an ideological model of literacy would construct a text message as writing *as well as* more traditional forms of alphabetic text. Street outlines six characteristics of an ideological model of literacy (excerpted below in fig. 2.1) that account for literacy as plural, contextualized, ideological, and political (8).

Fig. 2.1. Brian Street’s Six Characteristics of an Ideological Model of Literacy, from Brian Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1984; print; 8).

Although Street’s explication of the discriminatory and hegemonic dimensions of an autonomous model of literacy was published in 1984, his argument for framing literacy within an ideological
model is still relevant. As Julia Menard Warwick explains, “Although this ‘autonomous’
approach is no longer au courant in literacy studies, it lives on in the larger culture, especially in
the current political preoccupation with school children’s scores on narrowly conceived literacy
tests” (262).

Deborah Brandt, An Economic Model of Literacy and Sponsors of Literacy

In her 2001 manuscript, Deborah Brandt applied Street’s ideological model of literacy,
and in doing so, traced the development of literacy alongside the United States’ economy.
Receiving responses in the 1990s from her teachers-in-training to the question “How did you
learn to write,” Brandt recognized a need for a more detailed inquiry because of the “richness of
detail, of historical specificity, [and of] regional specificity”; thus, she expanded her inquiry
outside of her classroom (Literacy and Learning 5). As mentioned, she spent five years gathering
data and another six using grounded theory to analyze the data (Brandt, Literacy and Learning
8). She found that answers to her initial question, “how did you learn to write,” had to do with
the flux of the economy: “our transformation from agriculture to manufacturing to information,
was the incentive for a lot of literacy learning . . . As our economy changed, literacy got pulled
into production processes, and people’s literacy skills became the way that wealth got produced
and economic competitions were won and lost” (Brandt, Literacy and Learning 9).

The social and economic framework within which she traces the consequences of literacy
in American lives—what she terms literacy sponsors—provides an exigency for writing teachers
and researchers to begin seriously considering the implications of writing-non-writers. What is at
stake is no less than democratic agency:

    Literacy has always been intimately connected to . . . the well-functioning of
democracy. We know that having an educated citizenry was an important aspect
of democratic thought. And in a print society (or a post-print society now), our First Amendment rights, our freedom of speech, and the viability of our other rights are really linked up with literacy when you think about it. How can you have an effective voice in this society if your literacy is not protected and developed equally to others? (Brandt, *Literacy and Learning* 14)

Brandt’s concluding question drives my own research, particularly, what does it mean that people who write do not think of themselves as writers? Brandt’s work, along with Brian Street’s and Shirley Brice Heath’s, suggests that what this might mean is that the broad ideologically-mediated contexts of American culture, politics, and the economy are maintaining limiting definitions of writing and writers in the ways the literacy is taught and valued in both schools and workplaces at the expense of a democracy representative of the many different kinds of people who assert their differences in the ways they use language.

Engaging directly with student writers, my project seeks to understand from their perspectives the implications of boxed definitions of writing and writers that exclude many of us from identifying who we are and what we do within such parameters—I ask, can you have an effective “voice” in contemporary society even if you dissociate the writer identity that you daily perform from “the writer”?

*Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher, Technological Literacy*

Brandt’s work has been influential for a number of scholars, but perhaps the most relevant connection for my project is Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher’s 2004 *Literate Lives in the Information Age*, which re-invigorates literacy research with careful attention to the changing nature of communication practices with the ever-increasing presence of the (portable) personal computer and the World Wide Web. Through digital literacy narratives and co-authored case
studies with a variety of research participants, Selfe and Hawisher provide a view of literacy that is increasingly relevant for teachers and students today. As they acknowledge, “if U.S. students cannot write to the screen—if they cannot design, author, analyze, and interpret material on the Web and in other digital environments—they will have difficulty functioning effectively as literate human being in a growing number of social spheres” (2). Selfe and Hawisher extend both Street’s and Brandt’s work by focusing specifically on the screen and how “people have acquired and developed, or failed to acquire and develop, the literacies of technology during the past 25 years or so” (2). Their project argues that we do not yet understand “how historical, cultural, economic, political, or ideological factors have affected, or been affected by, peoples’ acquisition and development of these technological literacies” (2).

Self and Hawisher’s work gives extended attention to the biggest confrontation an (American) autonomous model of literacy has yet faced—the large scale and diverse adoption of computer-based communication. Yet, they approach the possibilities of such a movement with caution, noting that the definition of literacy has never been “stable” and that changes in literacy can be “rapid”—happening before we fully understand the consequences (213), and they acknowledge the limitations of access in the context of computer-environments based on race, class, and gender (Self and Hawisher 216–18).

Ultimately, their project developed from an interview-focused oral-history project to a large-scale, multi-participant, multimodal, interview-focused, co-authored research collective. In the closing chapter of the collection, Selfe and Hawisher outline eight themes (fig. 2.2) that emerged from their work that serve as a first step within the discipline of rhetoric and composition to trouble literacy with explicit attention to digital composing and thus allow more fully for an understanding the politics of digital literacy acquisition.
1. Literacy exists within a complex cultural ecology of social, historical, and economic effects. Within this cultural ecology, literacies have life spans.

2. Although a complex set of factors has affected the acquisition of digital literacy from 1978 to 2003, race, ethnicity, and class too often assume key roles. Because they are linked with other social formations at numerous levels, and because their effects are often multiplied and magnified by these linkages, race, ethnicity, and class are often capable of exerting a greater force than other factors.

3. Gender can often assume a key role in the acquisition of digital literacy, especially when articulated with other social, cultural, and materials factors.

4. Within a cultural ecology, people exert their own powerful agency in, around, and through digital literacy, even though unintended consequences always accompany their actions.

5. Schools, workplaces, communities, and homes are the four primary gateways through which those living in the United States have gained access to digital literacy in the decades since the invention and successful marketing of the personal computer.

6. Access to computers is not a monodimensional social formation. It is necessary but not sufficient for the acquisition and development of digital literacy. The specific conditions of access have a substantial effect on the acquisition and development of digital literacy.

7. Some families share a relatively coherent set of literacy values and practices—and digital literacy values and practices—and spread these values among their members. Information about, and support of, electronic literacy can flow both upstream and downstream, from older to younger members of a family.

8. Faculty members, school administrators, educational policymakers, and parents need to recognize the importance of the digital literacies that young people are developing, as well as the increasingly complex global contexts within which these self-sponsored literacies function. We need to expand our national understanding of literacy beyond the narrow bounds of print and beyond the alphabetic.

Fig. 2.2. Cynthia Selfe’s and Gail Hawisher’s Eight Themes of Technological Literacy, from Cynthia Selfe and Gail E. Hawisher, *Literate Lives in the Information Age: Narratives of Literacy from the United States* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004; print; 212–32).

As the literacy researchers cited here demonstrate, inquiries into literacy will need to be ongoing—literacy is always evolving, even if its public value is slow to adapt to the fast-paced changes, but so too are the power-negotiating ideologies surrounding identity and literacy acquisition and learning. Bronwyn Williams’ 2006 collection, *Identity Papers*, agrees: “The question today, then, is not whether identity and the cultural forces that shape it influence what
we write and how we teach, but how it does so” (7). As the work of Selfe and Hawisher and Shirley Brice Heath’s 2012 *Words at Work and Play* demonstrate, questions about literacy cannot be answered by researchers alone—as literacy and/or feminist and/or narrative and/or writing researchers, we continue to promote an autonomous model of literacy when we re-voice and re-imagine the purposes and intentions of our research “subjects” without negotiating or co-author(iz)ing our results with co-authors, or co-researchers, or as I describe the relationship in my study, co-researching-participants.

Writing

Though problematic, I freely use the word “writing” throughout my text. I agree with Paul Prior that the term “writing” evokes a problematically narrow understanding of what is a complex multilayered process. When I use the word writing I am referring to a “situated activity” that is one of many interactive and simultaneous literate activities. As Prior explains:

writing happens in moments that are richly equipped with tools (material and semiotic) and populated with others (past, present, and future). When seen as situated activity, writing does not stand alone as the discrete act of a writer, but emerges as a confluence of many streams of literate activity: reading, talking, observing, acting, making, thinking, and feeling as well as transcribing words on paper. (xi)

Similarly, to draw on an additional scholarly recognition of and navigation of the issues inherent within the word writing, in her 2004 “Intertextual Practices in the Construction of Multimodal Texts in Inquiry-Based Learning,” Roz Ivanič substitutes the word wrighting for
writing in order to intentionally signal that writing both refers to and more than words on paper.

As she articulates in her article:

In order to draw attention to the multimodal nature of the enterprise of text production, I am adopting the unusual practice of using the term “wrighter” rather than “writer” to refer to a maker of meanings in one or more modes—someone who “wrights” a text in the way a wheelwright “wrights” a wheel. This is in line with the use of the term “playwright” to mean a person who constructs the script for a multimodal performance—people in the theater deride the misspelling “playwrite” because it implies the construction of a verbal text and misses the implication of the multimodal character of the theater. (282)

Writing, therefore, is multimodal; it is interactive or rhetorical, communicative, and embodied; specific writing interactions can be placed in space and time, and though it is both historical and social, writing is non-temporal and non-spatial.

Identity

Scholars whose work with identity intersects with writing studies and rhetoric have called attention to perceived issues of identity as a topic of scholarly inquiry. For example, in her 1998 *Writer Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*, Roz Ivanič felt it necessary to write:

A focus on the writer’s voice in teaching or research became unfashionable, because it seemed to be a notion associated with the decontextualized view of writing. Those espousing a “social” view of writing and literacy now attacked the idea of “voice” in the sense of the writer’s “real self” speaking out, seeing it as
incompatible with the social constructionist view of reality. Post-structuralist theories of writing take this to the other extreme, understanding the social and discoursal construction of identity to entail “the death of the author,” and the conflicts of identity which real writers experience are overlooked along the way. (96–97)

Similarly, in his 1997 *Identity’s Strategy: Rhetorical Selves in Conversation*, Dana Anderson felt it necessary to remind his readers, “there may be times when it feels that identity is beneath us. But as the doxastically attuned rhetorician reminds, so are foundations” (163).

Conceptualizing or defining identity is also a complicated matter. As Erik H. Erikson explains in the “Preface” to his 1968 *Identity: Youth in Crisis*: “The more one writes about this subject, the more the word becomes a term for something as unfathomable as it is all-pervasive. One can only explore it by establishing its indispensability in various contexts” (9). In kind, Professor of Anthropology and Reading, James Collins, and Professor in Literacy Studies, Richard K. Blot, in their 2003 text *Literacy and Literacies: Texts, Power, and Identity*, also articulate the conceptual conflicts of a term like identity: “Identity . . . is difficult to pin down. It hinges on, and does not resolve, troublesome polarities: between essential versus constructed traditions and group-bound versus voluntarily chosen affiliations” (104).

Despite such difficulties, I have found that Dorothy Holland’s, William Lachicotte’s, Debra Skinner’s, and Carole Cain’s 1998 *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* offers a streamlined definition of identity that accounts for the richness and seeming contradictions of the term concisely: “Identity is one way of naming the interconnections between the intimate and public venues of social practice” (270). Identity, as Charles Bazerman has described writing, “exists at the intersections of individual and social, of intentions and uptake of others, of agency
and conformity, of form and meaning, of pattern and novelty. [Identity] exists at the intersections of the spontaneous and the planned; of the conscious and the nonconscious; of our histories, presents, and futures” (“The Wonder of Writing” 573).

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the “first recorded use of the word ‘identity’ [was] in 1570 as ‘identie’”; and it referred to “the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration absolute or essential sameness; oneness” (Benwell and Stokoe 18). In *Discourse and Identity*, Scottish Professor of Literature and Languages, Bethan Benwell and her English co-author Elizabeth Stokoe, who is a Professor of Social Interaction and Associate Editor of the *British Journal of Social Psychology* and Co-Editor of *Gender and Language*, explain that medieval and classical periods imposed “‘stark limitations on who had the right or ability to participate in even highly limited forms of self-fashioning’” and that identity did not become popular until the eighteenth-century Enlightenment (18).

Modernism’s construction of identity is glossed by Barbara Morgan-Fleming, Sandra Riegle, and Wesley Fryer, who cite the work of Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob in their characterization of the opportunities for self-differentiation following the feudal period: “This individual, himself a project of Kant’s challenge or ‘dare to know,’ was concerned primarily with issues about ‘personal authenticity and material progress’; he was an individual who questioned authority and its structures” (83). Since its first use, identity has not much changed in the popular consciousness and contemporary self-help books confirm that popular constructions of identity have not moved past an Enlightenment-driven and Romantic sense of identity as “an instrumental ‘project of the self’” (Benwell and Stokoe 18). In other words, although current theories of identity may, like current theories of literacy or writing, ascribe to dimensions that are
multiple and social, public theories tend towards a more unified and solitary sense of identity (as public theories of literacy and writing tend toward more autonomous models).

Although Collins and Blot argue that it was not until well into the 1960’s that “identity” was not “understood as referring to individuals and thus as the province of academic psychology” (101), within the academy today, identity is an interdisciplinary focus, and is theorized as both social and multiple, mediated by a variety of cultural, political, and institutional factors. Understanding identity in this way—as socially constructed—“recognizes the powerful influence of dominant ideologies in controlling and constraining people’s sense of themselves” (Ivanič, Writing and Identity 13).

Identity as Discoursal/Performed/Rhetorical

My understanding of identity is situated within discourse—or language interaction—and draws on the interdisciplinary work of scholars in a variety of disciplines but most notably those whose scholarly homes are in the English or Psychology departments in the academy. As countless other scholars within writing studies have (including Ivanič), I find Erving Goffman’s theatrical framework useful for understanding the self as performed in/through writing—think wrighting—in schools and in everyday life. As an incomplete simplification of Goffman’s theory, in individual actions, like writing, a person “intentionally or unintentionally expresses [her/]himself, and others will in turn have to be impressed in some way by [her/]him” (2), thus identities are constructed. I use Goffman’s analogy and borrow his language liberally to discuss the self-constructions of Stewie’s and Corrinne’s writerly selves. For example, I find Goffman’s conceptual mapping of the self as performed to account for the embodied, rhetorical, and social dimensions of identity—which is essential, as the excerpts I share from Ivanič’s and Anderson’s respective scholarly treatments of identity suggest.
To point specifically to an instance in Goffman’s text where his theory of identity as performed intentionally draws attention to the body and the self, in his first chapter, “Performances,” he cites Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* as a reminder to readers that although “social discipline” is ideological or seemingly internal, “we are helped in keeping this pose by clamps that are tightened directly on the body, some hidden, some showing” (57). The excerpt he includes from *The Second Sex* is worth sharing; it challenges the notion that a socially disciplined performance (like writing in school) within a patriarchal society is capable of expressing or revealing peoples’ selves:

> Even if each woman dresses in conformity with her status, a game is still being played: artifice, like art, belongs to the realm of the imaginary. It is not only that girdle, brassiere, hair-dye, make-up disguise the body and face; but that the least sophisticated of women, once she is “dressed,” does not present *herself* to observation; she is, like the picture or the statue, or the actor on the stage, an agent through whom is suggested someone not there that is, the character she represents, but is not. (qtd. in Goffman 57–58)

I also find particularly useful Goffman’s discussion in the third chapter of his 1959 manuscript, “Regions and Region Behavior,” where he develops the front and back regions of performative situations or identity constructions. Goffman argues, “In our Anglo-American society—a relatively indoor one—when a performance is given it is usually given in a highly bounded region” (106). At present, there is a plurality of possible performative regions; for example, as articulated by Goffman, “A region may be defined as any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception. Regions vary, of course, in the degree to which they are bounded and according to the media of communication in which the barriers of perception
occur” (106). The possibilities of “media of communication” since Goffman’s manuscript have generously multiplied; however, his language is generous enough to account for the rapid and continued expansion of communications media/technologies.

*Autobiography, Self-Identity, and Dialogue/Narrative/Story*

Goffman distinguishes self-identity from identity in terms of performative regions; self-identity is how/who people are when they are not on stage or behind the scenes. Another excerpt that Goffman includes from *The Second Sex* historicizes this identity distinction in terms of the gender discriminations against women that were ever present despite being challenged in the 1950s:

Confronting man woman is always play-acting . . . [W]hen with her husband, or with her lover, every woman is more or less conscious of the thought: “I am not being myself” . . . With other women, a woman is behind the scenes; she is polishing her equipment, but not in battle; she is getting her costume together, preparing her make-up, laying out her tactics; she is lingering in dressing-gown and slippers in the wings before making her entrance on the stage; she likes this warm, easy, relaxed atmosphere . . . (qtd. in Goffman 112–13)

In contrast, narrative theorists understand an identity performer as a character or an autobiographer (rather than as an actress); self-identity is distinguished from identity in terms of how people reflectively narrate themselves. For example, as Mark Freeman explains in *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*, “the processes of rewriting the self cannot help but culminate in fictions, in selective and imaginative literary constructions of who we have been and are” (8). Similarly, in their introduction to the manuscript result of a 1995 conference at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna on “narrative and identity,” Jens
Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh explain that scholars who attended the conference and participated in the resulting edited collection “gathered to explore, from the vantage points of their disciplines and their individual work, the importance of narrative as an expressive embodiment of our experience, as a mode of communication, and as a form for understanding the world and ultimately ourselves” (2). This narrative conceptualizing of identity and self-identity is not asocial; it positions the self as being derived in autobiographical memory that, as the embedded biographical-ness of the very word implies, suggests a layering of internal and social narratives, performances, and processes.

Thus, I understand identity as complicated, but plural, unstable, and inextricably bound to authority and power. I also understand identity as an interdisciplinary research inquiry, though its academic foundations in psychoanalysis are readily traceable. Lastly, I also understand identity as a performance and self-identity as constituted in narrative—autobiographies, conversations, dialogues, any variety of possible self-identified self (re)presentations.

**Writer Identity**

Roz Ivanič’s scholarly work has been devoted to developing a way to model and theorize writer identity, a term she has developed through such work. Although her scholarship emerged in the late 1990s, her body of work is extensive, and I do not have time to address the full variety of single-authored and collaborative manuscripts, articles, chapters, and presentations on writer identity Ivanič has contributed. I will, however, refer to her texts throughout my study and here, focus on three of her texts in particular: her 1998 manuscript, *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*; her 2005 chapter, “The Discoursal Construction of Writing Identity” in Richard Beach’s, Judith Green’s, Michael Kamil’s, and
Ivanič’s initial theorizing arose out of her teacher-researcher focus on adult students in British colleges and universities in the 1990s; she was interested in “focusing on the way in which writing academic assignments causes people to ‘change their speech,’ to take on particular identities, and how they feel about it” (7). Defining writing as “a way of occupying a subject position” (28), in this 1998 publication, she developed a four-pronged, complex, multidimensional, and discursive model of writer identity. Her textual model outlined three “aspects” of writer identity, or, “three ways of thinking about the identity of a person in the act of writing” (24):

- The autobiographical self: “the ‘self’ which produces a self-portrait, rather than the ‘self’ which is portrayed” (24).
- The discoursal self: “the writer’s ‘voice’ in the sense of the way they want to sound, rather than in the sense of the stance they are taking” (25).
- The self as author: “the writer’s ‘voice’ in the sense of the writer’s position, opinions and beliefs” (26).

Lastly, her model also included “possibilities for self-hood in the socio-cultural and institutional context” (27). This fourth branch of her model considers how “power, interests, values, and
beliefs are inscribed in the practices, genres and discourses which are supported by particular socio-cultural and institutional contexts” (29).

This model is non-linear and it attempts to theorize writerly identity because “the writer’s identity is an important and under-theorized dimension of the act of writing” (327). Further, this model represents Ivanič’s attempt to bring validity to studies of “identity” in academic contexts: “considerable attention has been paid to the context, the reader, the task, goals and purposes, processes, but researchers other than Cherry have neglected the writer, perhaps for fear of seeming overly romantic and ‘a-social’ by discussing the individual who produces the writing” (329).

“The Discoursal Construction of Writer Identity”

Seven years later, in her chapter included with a variety of other interdisciplinary explanations of literacy research, Ivanič offered a visual conceptualization of her theory of writer identity, what she called her “‘clover-leaf diagram’” (397–98). She also shifted from referring to three aspects of writer identity to four dimensions of writer identity—however, “possibilities for self-hood in the socio-cultural and institutional context” (1998)/“socially available possibilities for self-hood” remain in both models a kind of “outer surround” (“The Discoursal” 397). Figure 2.3 is an image of her model; she advises that readers engage with her model by starting with “The Autobiographical Self” and reading clockwise across the diagram, not as one would read a clock though; what she labels “The Authorial Self” and “The Discoursal Self” are simultaneous “dimensions” of identification at the moment a writer writes.
Fig. 2.3. Ivanič's Clover-Leaf Model of Writer Identity, from Roz Ivanič, “The Discoursal Construction of Writer Identity,” in Richard Beach, Judith Green, Michael Kamil, and Timothy Shanahan, Eds., *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Literacy Research* (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton P, 2005; print; 398, fig 15.1).

As I included her 1998 explanations, I also here excerpt her 2005 explanation for the evolution/revision:
[T]he autobiographical self is everything (shaped as it is by the socially available possibilities) that a writer brings to an act of writing. The discoursal self and the authorial self are aspects of the writer’s identity that are constructed (from the socially available possibilities) at the very moment of writing. The relation dimension is the way in which, at the moment of writing, the writer conceives of the reader(s) who will be constructing an impression of the writer (from the socially available resources on which they are able to draw) as they read what has been written. These dimensions are not hermetically sealed from one another, but are all inter-related . . . (398)

In this modeling, Ivanič, turning more directly to Goffman’s and Roger Cherry’s respective work, complicating her previous three-aspect modeling of writer identity by bringing the reader directly into focus with the addition of a “relational dimension”; as she rationalizes the addition: “This aspect of identity is at the heart of Goffman’s account of self-representation, and I think it needs to be included explicitly in the dimensions of writer identity” (400). She further argues that the relational dimension of writer identity comes into play when readers actually read a writer’s text; “At the moment the writer’s identity is (re)constructed discoursally, as the reader reads off an impression of the writer from the text” (400). (I would argue that writer identity is itself discoursal and that when a reader reads a writer’s text, aspects of the writer’s identity can be de-/re-/constructed; for example, a teacher can semantically de-construct what a student may have thought was a successful paper or essay; however, in this way, the teacher as reader is writing the impression rather than reading the impression.)
The last re-figuring or re-modeling of writer-identity I will discuss at this point, which is also Ivanič’s most recent that I am aware of, is her completely refashioned and collaborative model with Amy Burgess—who is also concerned with the discoursal aspect of writer identity in relation to adult literacy learners in England (see fig. 2.4). In this model, “socially available possibilities for selfhood” is framed/pictured as an additional “aspect” of writer identity. This 2010 collaborative model, like Ivanič’s original model, explains “the process of identification inherent in a specific act of writing” (236); however, it has five aspects of writer identity—(1) Socially available possibilities for selfhood; (2) The autobiographical self of the writer; (3) The discoursal self; (4) The authorial self; and (5) The perceived self—and these five aspects are placed within concentric circles that represent an addition to the model, Stanley Wortham’s theory of timescales. As Burgess and Ivanič explain:

We place the aspects in a series of concentric circles to indicate the varying timescales on which they exist; the arrows and dotted lines show that a specific act of writing involves the coordination of aspects of identity across different timescales, from the minimal length of time it takes to write or type the text represented at the centre of the figure, to the decades or even centuries of social time represented by the outer circle. (236)

This model is considerably more complex than the 2005 clover-leaf diagram. For example, rather than just a relational dimension where the reader resides, this 2010 model reimagines a diagram shared by writer(s) and reader(s). Similarly, Burgess and Ivanič emphasize how this model differs from Ivanič’s 1998 text-based modeling in two key ways: (1) it “emphasiz[es] the more
processual notion of ‘identification’”; and (2) it is “more sensitive to issues of time and timescale” (252).

This is a black and white reproduced image of Burgess and Ivanič’s figure, which they describe as “a diagrammatic representation of the processes and relationships that…construct writer identity” (236).

These are excerpts from Burgess’s and Ivanič’s text where they explain the significance of each arrow within their diagrammatic representation.

As they explain, “Arrows ‘a’ to ‘d’ represent the mechanisms whereby the possibilities for selfhood in the sociocultural contexts of reading and writing influence the discoursal self and the authorial self of the writer” (249). Similarly, arrows “e” to “h” add people who read the texts that others write into their

(a) “[T]he way in which the writer will have been exposed to certain ways of doing things, including certain communicative, certain ways of being, and to certain conventions as to who is allowed to do what. Exactly which resources, constraints, and conventions she has been exposed to will depend on the sociocultural contexts that she has encountered. She will have incorporated a selection of these possibilities for selfhood into her own repertoire of ways of acting and being: into her unique autobiographical self” (244).

(b) “The two arrows (both labeled ‘b’) from the autobiographical self of the writer to the discoursal self and the authorial self represent the way in which the writer will draw on her available repertoire of possibilities for self-hood in a single act of writing and thus represent the coordination of ontogenetic and microgenetic timescales” (245). “In Figure 1 arrow ‘b’ is two-way in order to represent the way in which an act of writing itself contributes to the development of the writer” (246).

(c) “Arrow ‘c’ in the figure represents the relationship between the discoursal self and the authorial self; they are both constructed in microgenetic time and are inextricably linked…” (247).

(d) “The two arrows labeled ‘d’ in Figure 1 linking the perceived writing to the discoursal self and the authorial self represent the way in which the writer takes into account her predictions of the reader(s) values, beliefs, interests,
and relative status at the moment of writing” (247).

(e) “[T]he way they [future readers] perceive the writer in what they read” (250).

(f) “The arrows labeled ‘f’ in Figure 1, pointing from the discoursal self and the authorial self to the perceived writer, represent the way in which, at a point in time later than when the text was written, the reader(s) will draw upon their values, beliefs, interests, expectations, and sense of relative status to ‘read the writer’. . . Crucially, this impression that the readers creates of the writer—one the basis of the evidence of the writer’s actions, words, and other semiotic means—may not be the same as the impression the writer consciously or subconsciously intended to convey” (250).

(g) “Arrow ‘g’ represents the way in which the future reader(s) of the writing will have been exposed to a range of socially available possibilities for selfhood (not necessarily the same range as the writer). . . Significantly, these actual reader characteristics are not necessarily the same as those the writer predicted while writing” (250).

(h) “In Figure 1, arrow ‘h’ represents the way in which an act of writing can construct an identity for the writer that, when read by others, can add in some small way to the pool of socially available possibilities for selfhood on which they might in future draw” (251).

| Fig. 2.4. Table 2.4 Amy Burgess and Roz Ivanič’s 2010 Model of Writer Identity and Accompanying Explanations from Amy Burgess and Roz Ivanič, “Writing and Being Written: Issues of Identity Across Timescales”; *Written Communication* 27.2 (1998): 228–255. Print, Figure 1. |

Ivanič’s work successfully restores agency to the writer without sacrificing the social and cultural dimensions of identity, language, and writing. For instance, her various modelings of writer identity each further distance a study of writer identity from romantic notions of the internal and a-social self but also from notions of uncritical expressivist treatments of writing. Each model invites writing researchers and teachers to imagine the complex identity processes (in)visibly and (un)consciously at work when a person sits down to write and also offers language that enables scholars to articulate those complex identity processes. There are two
primary differences between Ivanič’s study and mine worth noting: (1) Whereas Ivanič’s initial conceptualization arose out her focus on the discoursal selves of people (writers) 25 years old or older in the 1990s, mine arises out of my focus on the autobiographical or narrative writerly selves of people (writers) 18 years old or younger in the 2010s, and, (2) Whereas Ivanič’s initial single-authored manuscript featured academic texts and textual analyses accompanied by co-researcher dialogue from interviews with her about the text, I feature here (a) co-researching-participant dialogue from conceptual interviews with me about writing, writers, writer identity, and writer as a self-identity and (b) loosely-based oral history interviews with me about learning and literate activities and artifacts (online and off, in school and out, private and public, informal and formal) accompanied by a range of texts, including documentary videos, Mother’s Day cards, and animated PowerPoint stories.

Studies Directly Influenced by Ivanič’s Framework

In their 1999 article in *English for Specific Purposes*, “The ‘I’ in Identity: Exploring Writer Identity in Student Academic Writing Through the First Person Pronoun,” Ramona Tang’s and Suganthi John’s discussion of writer identity is also inspired by Ivanič’s work, and like Ivanič, their inquiry is centered around academic texts. Tang and John were interested in understanding “how writers create identities for themselves in their academic writing,” and they chose to investigate this research question by analyzing how students used first person pronouns in their academic texts (S24); for example, they particularly focused on “the different kinds of identities that students can bring into their writing when they use the first person pronoun” (S35). As they explain in their article, “Language does not serve merely as a tool to express a self that we already have, but serves as a resource for creating that self” (S24).
In an attempt to better understand how students write themselves into being discoursally, their study collected essays that were assigned to 27 students in “a first-year English Language module” (S29) and then analyzed the essays (a) based on if the student writers used first-person pronouns and (b) “to ascertain the roles that are behind these first person references” (S30). In their conclusion, they argue there are multiple ways that the use of the first-person pronoun in academic writing positions students, and they argue that writing classrooms and teachers more fully attend to these possibilities, turning seemingly “‘subconscious’ choices into conscious, well-informed decisions” (S36). They also advocate that writer identity in general be a subject of discussion in writing classrooms, advising that teachers “draw the attention of students to the fact that their language choices reflect who they are in their writing” (S35–36).

Linda A. Fernsten also cited Ivanič’s early work on writer identity in her 2008 case study exploration of how an undergraduate junior-level Korean American female student constructed an identity for herself as a writer. Fernsten, like me, found her research participant and former student Mandy’s “aspects of negative writer identity” problematic (45). Interested in “the link[s] between Mandy’s own identity construction and the social, cultural, and political world that shaped her perceptions” (45), Fernsten used a variety of methods in her study, including “ethnographic analysis of classroom events, thematic analysis of Mandy’s description of her writer identity and influences, and CDA [critical discourse analyses] of selected written work and spoken events” (45). Fernsten concluded that Mandy’s lack of confidence in herself as a writer stemmed from the fact that the discourses that she privileged (based on her unique life-experiences) were in competition with the discourses academic contexts privileged. Thus, Fernsten urged teachers to incorporate “expressive assignments” into their classrooms, as they allow “for hybridity, a blending of genres and discourses” (51).
Sarah Read also drew on Ivanič’s 1998 manuscript in her exploration of writer identity that appeared in 2011 in the *Journal of Writing Research*. Read’s article develops out of her experience as a Master of Fine Arts student who was also “a writing consultant embedded in an engineering department” (94). Like Tang and John and Fernsten, Read articulates that writer identity is an underexplored area for writing researchers and pedagogues, and she advocates that writer identity be an interdisciplinary curricular concern. As such, in her article she explores the “value of developing writing curriculum that broadens the available writer identity for engineers beyond the stereotypes of ‘bad,’ ‘ineloquent,’ or ‘boring’” (108).

Although there are other examples of scholarly literature that take up Ivanič’s work with writer identity, the last I will note is Mary Soliday’s brief report (also based on Ivanič’s 1998 model) that appeared in the February 2013 inaugural issue of *Literacy in Composition Studies*. Soliday profiles her collaborative work with Tara Lockhart at San Francisco State University, through which they have found that “undergraduates believe they grow as writers when they can relate aspects of the autobiographical self to their schooled authorship” (par. 3). Thus, as was suggested by New Literacy scholars in the 1990s, Soliday argues that composition teachers ultimately need to begin “imagining the bridge between everyday and academic literacy practices” (par. 8).

**Conclusion: Research Opportunities/Project Goals**

As my too brief review of Ivanič’s and other scholars’ work relevant to writer identity confirms, how individuals come to call, see, and think of themselves as writers or not is a complex research question that has been and can be addressed from a plethora of conceptual and methodological angles, in a variety of contexts, and with a variety of different populations.
Often, it is a research question that is answered by focusing on texts (rather than practices, memories, narrations, or stories). Thus, though many scholars of writer identity do use interview methods, their interview focus is often limited to what Ivanič calls the discoursal self, the selves the people construct in texts. There is an opportunity to research writer identity from a narrative angle, not focusing on a particular text or particular texts, but focusing on stories, which is the primary goal of my study: Goal 1, Better understand, holistically and without centering on a particular text, how and why people come to call, see, and think of themselves as writers (or not)—to better understand the autobiographical dimensions of Ivanič’s theory of writer identity—and to also understand what kinds of texts students identify as able to express their self-identities as writers and why.

As Haswell and Sullivan respectively suggest about the broader field of RCW, student voices are missing from scholarly conversations about their own (students’) writing and/or identities. This is something also evidenced by Morris Young’s 1996 article in the *Journal of Basic Writing* that contains excerpts from in-school student writing from when he, as a teacher, asked/required his students to reflect on writing and writers. The student “voices” included are those sanctioned by school. Similarly, Thomas Newkirk’s 1997 influential and reflective approach to exploring the performance of the self-identities of student writers also relied on excerpts from in-school texts created by students. In general, student voices (aside from those that academic assignments ask/require them to contribute) are missing from conversations about what writing is and who writers are and about student self-identities as writers. Similarly, how students come to call, see, and think of themselves as writers or not is a research question that is often answered by working with traditional and non-traditional (25 years and older and second language) college students. Throughout chapters 4 and 5—Stewie’s and Corrinne’s co-
authorized narrative case studies and exhibits of self-identified performances of their self-identities as writers—I intersperse a variety of calls from scholars such as Margaret Voss and those whose work comprises Leila Christenbury’s, Randy Bomer’s, and Peter Smagorinsky’s 2009 edited collection, *Handbook of Adolescent Literacy Research* who point out that adolescent voices are particularly relevant and particularly sparse. Therefore, I address this research opportunity with the second goal of my study: Goal 2, Multiply the presence of adolescent voices in scholarly regions where identity, learning, literacy, teaching, and writing are being discussed.

Finally, as is suggested by the pedagogical calls outlined from a variety of scholarly works concerned with writer identity, the third and last goal of my study is focused explicitly on the classroom: Goal 3, Consider ways classrooms can open the identity of writer to a variety of individuals.

In this chapter, I have thoroughly mapped how I conceptually mesh together interdisciplinary conversations and terminology concerning literacy, writing/writing, identity, self-identity, and writer identity. I have also reviewed a range of studies relevant to understanding the full complexity of a term like writer identity and the variety of research methodologies and methods researchers have employed to do so in their work. Based on the work of such scholars, I have outlined opportunities for further research and my project goals; thus, in chapter 3, I briefly clarify my use of narrative methodology in my case study approach to studying the self-identities of two separate adolescent writers and how I mesh a variety of methods from RCW to achieve the goals of my study before moving into case study reports.
CHAPTER 3. NARRATIVE INQUIRY AS RCW LITERACY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection needs to address a wide range of participants’ semiotic performances, not just activities that involve the production of seemingly similar kinds of texts (e.g., extended prose essays). Also, data collection needs to address the temporal distance separating performances, either by extending inquiry for longer spans of time and/or by collecting data from different periods in participants’ lives . . . Second, data collection needs to focus on illuminating the practices and processes of textual invention that obtain in those activities. In addition to collecting the finished products of participants’ semiotic performances, text collection should involve collecting a wide range of what Witte (1992) refers to as “minor” texts, texts created and used to mediate activity rather than for publication. However, because even the closest analysis of the features of texts, regardless of whether they are produced for public consumption or serve only to mediate activity, alone do not tell the whole story of the practices involved in their invention, production, and use, text-based interviews are essential.


Indeed, one might say that the history of composition research is, in part, the history of coming to terms with narrative.


Although Ivanič and other scholars have explicitly taken up writer identity in their respective works, and although Ivanič provides a theoretical framework for writer identity that acknowledges that when writing researchers take identity as the focus of their inquiry, they are doing so in contextualized ways, I draw the research methodology that informs my own study of writer identity from interdisciplinary manifestations of the turn to narrative in the social sciences and specifically within RCW. In part, the goals of my study—to better understand writer as a self-identity from students’ points of view and to add adolescent voices to primarily disciplinary conversations—are what led me to narrative inquiry, a methodological framework that privileges practices rather than texts (De Fina and Georgakopoulou). In this chapter, I situate my use of narrative inquiry, and I also make clear how I navigate conflicts between this interdisciplinary
approach and my study by drawing on methods and ways of researching literacy invented and employed by scholars within RCW.

A variety of factors led me to identify my case studies as narrative case studies and myself as a narrative researcher. As mentioned, I conceptually understand self-identity as constituted by autobiographical memory, which is inherently narrative, rhetorical, and social. I was also drawn to a narrative methodology because in their chapter in Nickoson’s and Sheridan’s 2012 edited collection, Writing Studies Research in Practice, Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher align their work researching literate lives within and without the United States—“eliciting autobiographical stories in interview-type settings” (38)—with narrative theory, citing, for instance, Jerome Bruner’s much anthologized essay “Self-Making and World Making.”

I was also involved in an archival research project prior to and throughout my study of writer identity; thus, women’s recovery scholars, like Anne Ruggles Gere, Katherine Hobbs, Lucille Schultz, Liz Rohan, and Jean Ferguson Carr influence the methodology I use in this project. These scholars have refigured histories with women, reminding literacy and writing studies scholars that unless we look into homes and communities, places outside of schools, and beyond “model essays” when we research literacy, we are missing a lot of the picture—for instance, such limitations historically excluded the experiences and practices of girls and women from histories of literacy and rhetorical experience, learning, instruction, and practice. It is from this scholarly region within RCW that I first learned the importance of and how to appreciate the everyday (Sinor).

As one last explanation of my methodological underpinnings: as a reader, I was struck by the power of critically framed anecdotes when reading (literacy) autoethnographies (like Mike Rose’s and, especially, Keith Gilyard’s). I felt the topic of writer identity could be deeply
understood within the context of individuals’ critical reflections on their encounters with literacy learning and practices; thus, I draw on a variety of methods in order to develop such contexts and draw out such critical reflections from everyday people (rather than well-trained, disciplinarily-versed academics like Rose and Gilyard). For example, although I use questionnaires in my research (what I refer to as a dialogic instrument), the results of the questionnaires are not the end goal; CRPs’ interactions with and interpretations and analyses of those questionnaire results are, as are the mini-stories and opportunities for reflection that such interpretations and analyses often encourage.

**Narrative Inquiry**

In their 2008 introduction to a special issue of *Text & Talk*, editors Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou explain that the purpose of the issue was to “contribute toward the charting of the paradigmatic shift within narrative analysis from narrative as text to narratives as practices” (280). *The Handbook of Narrative Inquiry* helps to outline this so-called paradigmatic shift, positing that, in general and across disciplines, there are “four turns” in the “thinking” and “action” of “an individual, discipline, or group of researchers” that characterize narrative inquiries:

1. a change in the relationship between the person conducting the research and the person participating as the subject (the relationship between the researcher and the researched),
2. a move from the use of number toward the use of word as data,
3. a change from a focus on the general and universal toward the local and specific, and finally
4. a widening in acceptance of alternative epistemologies or ways of knowing. (Pinnegar and Daynes 7)
My recruiting of co-researching-participants (as opposed to subjects or participants) and my reliance on oral histories and the anecdotes and stories relevant to specific writerly-artifacts or experiences (rather than textual analyses of formal essays) are reflective of the narrative inquiry-based actions Pinnegar and Daynes outline.

There are several other ways that my study aligns with narrative inquiry as well. For example, in “The Ethical Attitude in Narrative Research: Principles and Practicalities”—chapter 21 in *The Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*—Ruthellen Josselson offers a general description of narrative inquirers that is well-suited to my research approach in this study: “Narrative researchers do their work by (politely) intruding on people in the course of living real lives and asking them to help us learn something. We do this in hope that what we learn will be of some benefit to others or will contribute to basic knowledge about aspects of human experience” (538). Stewie’s description of our research relationship in the positioning and motivations statements that he provided in chapter 1—he chose to participate to be nice and I get information from him—confirm that my study seemingly fits well into this research community that Josselson describes. As another example, Josselson describes the differences between researchers who adopt a narrative inquiry methodology “in terms of whether their research goal is ‘giving voice’ to their participants or ‘decoding’ the texts of their interviews at some other level of understanding” (548). Thus, not only does my study seem to fit nicely within the body of work developed by narrative inquirers, it also seems to fit nicely within a niche of this community of researchers. However, there are also central conflicts between my study and Josselson’s characterization of narrative inquiry. Luckily, my disciplinary positioning within RCW helps to negotiate such conflicts.
As one example of conflict, Josselson argues: “The principle of assurance of privacy to participants is central to the very possibility of doing narrative research. Unless our participants trust that we will insure their anonymity they would not tell us what they tell us” (541). Though Stewie and Mrs. Daniels are confidential study participants, Corrinne is not (something I discuss more in chapter 5). However, despite Josselson’s claims, Selfe and Hawisher describe their interview processes as narratively influenced, and, at times, co-author that research with their participants (as they do in individual chapters in Literate Lives). So, within RCW, narrative methodology can accommodate both confidential (as is the case with Brandt’s research) and non-confidential research participation. In fact, Bump Halbritter and Julie Lindquist have outlined the theories underlying and the methods supporting such a narrative methodology for RCW in their recent College English article, “Times, Lives, and Videotape: Operationalizing Discovery in Scenes of Literacy Sponsorship.”

Within RCW, narrative methodology is also practiced in ways that accommodate collaborative relationships between researchers and participants (as Selfe and Hawisher’s various and award-winning co-authorships suggest). Yet, this is another matter that Josselson critiques in her chapter in The Handbook of Narrative Inquiry:

While the task of the researcher in the data-gathering phase is to clarify and explore the personal meanings of the participant’s experience, the task in the report phase is to analyze the conceptual implications if these meanings to the academy. Thus, at the level of the report, the researcher and the participant are at cross-purposes, and I think that even those who construe their work as “giving voice” and imagine the participants to be fully collaborative with them in the research endeavor are in part deluding themselves. (549)
To further emphasize the impossibility of collaborative research relationships and continue calling into question their ethics, Josselson also writes, “After the meeting(s) with the participants, the text belongs to the researcher, and what we write is our interpretation of it. We take full interpretive authority for our understanding of it. I think it is foolhardy to foist our writing on our participants, although we should make them available” (550). Though I admit that fully collaborative research relationships with participants can be difficult to cultivate (something Mary Sheridan reflects on in her co-authored chapter in Selfe’s and Hawisher’s Literate Lives), there is a rich tradition within RCW that supports co-authorship. As another example in addition to Selfe’s and Hawisher’s work, there is Andrea Lunsford’s and Jenn Fishman’s report on the Stanford Study of Writing that was co-researched with two graduate students who participated in the study and co-authored in College Composition and Communication.

The thought of fully collaborative research relationships between researcher and researched is hardly delusional within RCW and, similarly, co-interpretation and co-authorship are imagined as something entirely different from the foisting that Josselson implies. For example, Halbritter’s and Lindquist’s narrative (and digital/multimodal) method for investigating literacy sponsorship is based on the scaffolded interview processes that they employ in their work with LiteracyCorp Michigan. They describe that this scaffolding, “develops as a set of rhetorical moves, a research relationship, and a productive collaboration” (176). In further support that collaboration within narrative research relationships is not just a lofty or naïve goal, Halbritter and Lindquist argue that “researchers must teach participants to, in turn, teach the researchers how best to learn from them” (196). What RCW brings to interdisciplinarily constructed narrative methodologies are a variety of ways to conduct research inquiries
collaboratively in ways that are ethical, explicit, and intentional. As I discuss later in this chapter, but as my reliance on Selfe and Hawisher and Halbritter and Lindquist suggests, RCW not only disrupts single-authored, single-interpreted, and single-researched narrative research relationships, but also disrupts alphabetic notions of narrative as well.

In my own study, I did not feel that I had adequate time to cultivate a fully collaborative research relationship with participants (hence my use of the term co-researching-participants). Similarly, as the dissertation genre discourages collaboratively authored texts, I also felt unable to co-author my study with “participants,” hence my use of co-authorized narratives in my dissertation title. In order to co-authorize my research results with participants, I drew on one of Halbritter’s and Lindquist’s interview processes and used the text-based interviews that Kevin Roozen describes in the epigraph that opens this chapter, both which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

Data Collection: Dialogic Instruments

In her chapter in Nickoson’s and Sheridan’s edited collection, “Narrative Turns in Writing Studies Research,” Debra Journet explained that running parallel to the evolution of New Literacy Studies sprouting out of the 1980s (pioneered by the ethnographic literacy research of Shirley Brice Heath and Brian Street), research methods within composition studies began to reflect the so-called “social turn” in the academy; “composition research started to emphasize the social contexts and personal histories out of which writing arises and concomitantly to incorporate narrative more explicitly into research genres” (14). Providing a disciplinary historical overview of narrative, Journet identified a variety of “narrative turns” within composition.
Although she firmly intertwined the history of composition with the broader history of narrative research methods within the academy, she also advised narrative researchers and readers of narrative research to resist thinking of narrative as “a kind of transparent window onto individual subjectivity,” as always or necessarily “authentic” and “genuine,” and as easily or readily verifiable (15–17). Journet’s caution to narrative researchers here is similar to Thomas Newkirk’s caution to case study researchers in Kirsch’s and Sullivan’s earlier 1992 collection, *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. For example, Newkirk posited, “the case-study writer draws on a core of mythic narratives—deeply rooted story patterns that clearly signal to the reader the types of judgments to be made” (135).

Journet articulated that a particular challenge for current narrative researchers is that rigor is seemingly established by “ethos (rather than method),” as she concisely summarizes her main point, “a great deal of our ‘index or reality’ rests on textual conventions to suggest that the reader has ‘been there’” (20). Thus, here, I emphasize the methods-based approach I used to conduct and report on my narrative research by discussing different dialogic instruments and interview-methods that I adopted, designed, and remixed in my study: oral histories and literacy narratives, questionnaires, archives, artifact-based interviews, and text-based interviews.

Throughout case study chapters, I am explicit about the methods I used to collect and represent triangulated constructions of CRPs’ narratives (triangulated in the sense that I combine CRPs’ text(s), dialogue, writing, images, and anecdotes). In my conclusion (chapter 6), I also reflect on the partiality and biases of the narrative case studies I offer in chapters 4 and 5, addressing a closing reflective question posed by Journet: “What ethical obligations do we have to the people whose stories we tell?” (21).
CRPs and I each met about once a month (face-to-face or via FaceTime and telephone contact) from around December 2011 to March 2013. The majority of our meetings were conversational; we talked generally and specifically about writing, writers, writer identity, and what they each identified as representative performances of their writerly selves. Some meetings were longer than others (depending upon planned activities or conversation and, often, unplanned discussion), and, in order to plan ahead for conversation, I implemented various “dialogic instruments” (oral histories/autobiographical narratives, questionnaires, and archives). Each dialogic instrument is not meant to be understood as or equated with a particular research meeting but, rather, more as an “activity” that triggered anecdotes, additional details relevant to previous discussions or texts, and a general (often CRP-determined) path for immediate or future conversation(s).

In the anecdotes, dialogue, and writing that activities or dialogic instruments elicited, various themes and recurring conversations emerged. Those themes, in turn, shaped in-process and follow-up interviews as I urged CRPs to contemplate how their experiences with learning to read and write and their broader literate activities related to their decisions to identify or not as writers and what their experiences could/should mean for future writing classrooms. I implemented a variety of interviewing strategies to encourage dialogue in such follow up interviews, as explained, modeling meetings after artifact-based (Halbritter and Lindquist) and text-based (Roozen) interviews.

*Oral Histories/Autobiographical Narratives*

As Deborah Brandt’s work helped me to understand my teacher-researcher question as a sustainable narrative inquiry into literacy, I augmented her interview question set from her 2001 *Literacy in American Lives* to encourage CRPs to recall learning to read and write (with
computers) in school and out. I worked off of Brandt’s interview set because in her research, although it did not focus explicitly on writerly identity, she found that people resisted identifying as writers (even people who were published). I used the questions loosely (as described by Selfe and Hawisher)—meaning I had questions in mind and used them to prod people to generate autobiographical narratives (which I video-recorded) about learning to read and write with computers and in turn learning what writing was and who writers were.

**Writer’s Questionnaire**

I asked Stewie and Corrinne to complete a writer’s questionnaire and video-recorded their responses (see Appendix B). The writer’s questionnaire was a way for CRPs to generate dialogue about writing and writers that was not spoken—giving them more time to think and to reflect. The classroom-based anecdote that I reflect on in my introduction—when a student in my class identified herself as a novelist—emerged out of a workshop I implemented through a “writer’s questionnaire”; so, I felt a questionnaire was an effective way to invite adolescents to think and talk about (both in writing and in speech) their writerly selves.

**Perceptual Learning Styles Preference Questionnaire**

I also asked Stewie and Corrinne to complete Joy Reid’s Perceptual Learning Styles Preference Questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was not to distinguish what kinds of learners CRPs were, but instead, to encourage CRPs to talk about, assess, and critique different kinds of learning experiences they had participated in. Hence, upon completing the questionnaire that determined their major and minor learning style preferences based on five categories (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, and group), I asked CRPs to reflect on their results in terms of specific teaching styles, classroom experiences, and specific assignments that resonated (or not) with them.
Archives

I also gave Stewie and Corrine each a cardboard box from Staples and a flash drive. I asked that they fill both with artifacts representative of their writerly identities. Archive assembly generated artifacts and texts (in addition to the questionnaires and transcripts of various interviews) that would serve to guide later conversations and follow-up interviews. As Halbritter and Lindquist explain their rationale for research participants engaging in artifact selections, “In the hands of participants, the artifacts come pre-loaded with stories about why they were selected, why they are important, and the roles they have played in the students’ lives” (189).

I was also motivated to ask CRPs to assemble archives because of the extensive catalogue of data listed by Roozen and also because in conducting archival research, I was intimately aware, as Barbara A. Biesecker has articulated: “Whatever else the archive may be—say, an historical space, a political space, or a sacred space; a site of preservation, interpretation or commemoration—it always already is the provisionally settled scene of our collective invention, of our collective invention of us and it” (124). Biesecker calls the archive a scene of invention; Halbritter and Lindquist call artifacts scenes of discovery.

I was also motivated to ask CRPs to assemble archives because of Liz Rohan’s work (broadly speaking) but in particular because of her 2010 Composition Studies article “Everyday Curators: Collecting as Literate Activity.” In her article, Rohan, having incorporated archival methods into her writing classroom, noted the possibilities inherently available when writing students are asked to be collectors, curators, and narrators of their own literate artifacts and lives:

If we conceive of ourselves as lifetime collectors of meaningful, history-making, and transformative activities, we might better link what we do in school to the research and identity-shaping activities that give our lives meaning when “at
home.” In other words, we might better see the liminal spaces connecting our “real-world” passions with both the materials and methods gained from formal school settings, and we might better understand ourselves as everyday history makers synthesizing complicated and competing discourses in an interdisciplinary world, every day, and all of our life. (67)

Asking CRPs to assemble an archive or artifacts representative or important to their writer identities, I invited CRPs to begin making connections and narrating patterns and themes across the various writerly selves they had saved and then consciously chosen to archive.

The archive assembly also allowed me to access spaces (in terms of time and place) of CRPs’ lives I did not have access to—which, as the latest addition of timescales to Ivanič’s diagram and the opening epigraph from Kevin Roozen suggest, is necessary for researchers of writer identity and writing as literate activity. For example, while I met with Stewie in his home, where we were in his personal space and often surrounded by his family members, Corrinne and I met on campus in my office; so, in Corrinne’s case, her archive also introduced personal dimensions that were missing from her case study because we met on campus.

Artifact-Based Interviews

Having assembled their archives, I asked CRPs to give me narrative tours of what they chose to include, explain how they selected items, and explain the significance of the artifacts they selected. My motivations here were influenced by the work of Halbritter and Lindquist, who, drawing on the work of Kate Pahl and Jennifer Roswell, outline the “functions” of their own artifacts interviews (189):

- to establish the relational ground between participant and researcher
- to establish rhetorical ground (genre, language, terms of engagement)
• to introduce the interview as a scenic event
• to build a narrative infrastructure to support stories that emerge in later moments
• to locate the beginnings of possible narrative trajectories
• to introduce scenes of audiovisual recording

As an “artifacts interview” is the first in a four-phase research design that Halbritter and Lindquist invented and employ in their research, my own use differs slightly from theirs. For example, I began interviews by collecting oral histories (or life stories) specifically focused on learning to read and write (with computers) at home, in school, and in extracurricular environments and activities. So, whereas Halbritter and Lindquist begin with an artifacts interview in their work, in my study, artifacts interviews mark an important point where anecdotes, experiences, texts, and practices begin to align.

Text-Based Interviews

Lastly, in addition to narrative tours, I also asked CRPs to categorize their archives. In the categorization stage, CRPs theorized writer identity and writer as a self-identity by selecting critical artifacts that more easily and less easily represented who they were as people and as writers. As CRPs identified texts that were significant, our interviews took on the character of what Roozen describes as text-based interviews, where researcher and participant meet and discuss a particular or a particular grouping of texts, or, as Roozen describes this scene as well, research and participant might also discuss previous interview transcripts or different drafts of findings and conclusions.
Conclusion

Having contextualized my inquiry, I now move into case study chapters where I discuss the results of my application of the various theories outlined in chapter 2 and the various methods outlined in this chapter. In my own crafting of case study reports, I have tried to make clear elements of the report that are co-authored, co-authorized, and co-interpreted versus those elements that are not. I also compose chapters drawing on narrative methods of re-presentation (Ely) and Roozen’s methods of mapping and tracing trajectories of practice, which I make clear throughout each case study report.
CHAPTER 4. “I’M NOT A WRITER, I’M SOMEONE WHO WRITES TYPES”: CONVERSATIONS WITH STEWIE AND MRS. DANIELS

Mrs. Daniels: I think my son has always had a love/hate relationship with writing. Not because of his feeling for it or his liking or disliking it, but because of the restrictions put on his writing by others.

Stewie: I just feel like not everyone can be a writer... When you have to write a story and [teachers] say, “oh, well, everyone’s a writer”—Well, not everyone really is.

This is a chapter about why a 14-year-old who spends weekends surfing the Internet to gather, rearrange, and re-present information about his favorite video game series, Call of Duty; who retreats to bed with his iPod Touch to type out Star Wars stories in the darkness and on the tiny screen; and who spends hundreds of hours working with shapes and lines to create digital stories about alien abductions and zombie ambushes does not call himself a writer. Stewie’s story, his experiences with reading and writing instruction, and his subsequent definition of a “writer,” provide a view of how formalized education promotes autonomy—in terms of literacy and identity—in one adolescent’s life. Most importantly, Stewie’s story also provides a view of how one particular teenage boy recognizes and pushes against “autonomous,” “obedient,” “standard,” and “normal” notions of the writer and writing, and at what cost.

Stewie’s experiences also suggest that access to a computer and the Internet do not necessarily mean access to or participation in remix or convergence culture—for instance, using new media to network and create meaning and cultural phenomena with strangers via the World Wide Web. Open access publishing platforms like Wordpress, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook—technological tools—do not themselves disrupt an exclusive scene of writing or mythic notions of the writer as author or (print-based) creative genius. People have to have interest in and also be using these tools; people have to have access to these tools; and people
need to value the ways that they repurpose the tools to convey or create something that is different from and at the same time becoming “writing.”

As Sam Intrator and Robert Kunzman have argued in *In the Handbook of Adolescent Literacy Research*, “developing habits of practice and methodologies that engage youth in systematic conversation about who they are, what they experience in their schooling, and how their future aspirations are being shaped by those institutional forces in their life is a worthy project” (43). By sharing anecdotes about Stewie’s experiences in school provided by both himself and his mother, by sharing Stewie’s theories about what writing is and about what constitutes the identity of writer, and by making space within these pages for the performance of Stewie’s writerly selves, this chapter presents one adolescent’s perspective on writing and writers alongside theories of education (Bourdieu), discipline, power, and the body (Foucault), the economy (Brandt), and language (Barthes).

**Chapter Outline**

I provide demographic information about the Daniels family and background information from Mrs. Daniels about Stewie’s experiences in school and with assignments, teachers, and the principal. The background information that Mrs. Daniels provides is represented in three different profiles, each offering an anecdote that enables readers to understand Stewie as someone who develops and cultivates an identity in resistance to school. This resistance carries over into and helps to contextualize Stewie’s hesitancy to see himself as a writer. In many ways, the information that opens this chapter from Mrs. Daniels provides one version of what social anthropologist Erving Goffman would call a “back region” of Stewie’s own narrative contributions—Mrs. Daniels’ anecdotes provide a “behind the scenes” view of Stewie’s narrative
and help to explain why Stewie is not invested in the identities that formalized schooling asks
him to take on or project outward when he is asked to write as “a writer” (111-12).

Moving away from contextual information, I focus on how, based on his experiences in
school—teachers trying to force him (unsuccessfully) to hold a pencil “the right way” and
learning to type through a skills-based program while a black box hid his hands and the keyboard
from eyesight—Stewie theorizes writing as an embodied practice; so much so, in fact, that
Stewie used his body rather than speech to generate dialogue about learning to write. Stewie’s
story confirms sociolinguist James Paul Gee’s argument that learning “is about learning the right
moves in embodied interactions in the real world or virtual worlds, moves that get one
recognized as ‘playing the game’: that is, enacting the right sort of identity for a given situation”
(48-9). However, while Gee posits that “Learning does not work well when learners are forced to
check their bodies at the school door like guns in the old West” (Situated Language 39), Stewie
complicates this notion, instead arguing that training student bodies is a foundational and
ongoing component of learning, particularly of writing instruction. Working off of Foucault,
Bourdieu, and Brandt, I explicate the ideological dimensions of Stewie’s embodied accounts of
learning to write and suggest how such experiences may have influenced him to dis-identify or
de-socialize as a writer.

Next, as Stewie defined writing as “a thin line between something you want to do and
something that you have to do,” I implement an interactive map of Stewie’s archive in order to
accentuate how this tension plays out in Stewie’s experiences composing. My interactive
“mapping” is to be taken as a multimodal and digital pastiche. Margot Ely defines pastiche
within narrative inquiries as “the product of textual experiments that seek to challenge linear,
simplistic descriptions of meaning exactly because the nature of narrative research is antithetical to such linearity” (586).

Finally, I introduce Stewie’s qualifications for what makes someone, or constructs someone as, a writer. Stewie explicitly suggests that the identity writer entirely rests upon whether or not someone is published. He also implicitly suggests both in dialogue and through visuals that the identity writer applies only to creative and print-based authors, or “people who write books.” I explicate these two suppositions through Brandt’s work concerning the economic dimensions of literacy—“literacy is valuable – and volatile – property” (Literacy in American 2). Similarly, I bring dialogue focused on how Stewie defines the identity writer, why he separates himself from the identity writer, and how he and others talk about himself and his writing together with Shirley Brice Heath’s framework for understanding the development of arts identities in extracurricular organizations. Through concrete examples, I suggest several overlapping and interrelated reasons that help to explain how Stewie came to be and why he is currently a writing-non-writer.

**Demographic Information**

The Daniels family has five members, Mr. Daniels, Mrs. Daniels, their 18-year-old daughter, their 14-year-old son, and their dog Mia. They live near State University and are good friends with neighbors who are an English professor and a married couple who happen to be a high school English teacher and the high school principal (who tutors Stewie in math). Mrs. Daniels describes her family as a “crack family”—in school, not at the top of the class or at the bottom of the class, and in tax brackets, too well-positioned to qualify for federal aid and yet not so well-positioned that they can thoughtlessly write college tuition checks. The Daniels
encourage their children to participate in extracurricular activities (like dance and soccer), to work, to save money, and to plan for their futures. They also encourage their children to do well in school yet understand that “grades” do not necessarily reflect “intellect” and that teachers can be subjective.

Mr. Daniels has an engineering degree and is Vice President of a local small business; he is also affiliated with the University’s college of technology. His job requires that he travel, often internationally. Mrs. Daniels is a stay-at-home, mom-on-the-run. She shuttles kids back and forth from ballet, soccer, school, the movies—and she also comes prepared with snacks, particularly well-loved for her pizza Fridays, and drills the occupants of her car about what is happening in school, with teachers, and with assignments while they contentedly munch. She also makes appointments with teachers and principals when it seems her son is not doing as well in his classes as he could.

She programs her schedule into her Droid phone, can text message using voice recognition software, and is savvy with Internet filtering and limitations across different household technologies. Stewie, for instance, can link to the Internet to play Call of Duty online during the time he is permitted to play video games, but he cannot connect with other players to talk. His gaming is on what Mrs. Daniel referred to as a “family timer.” Stewie is allowed to play seven hours of video games a week, mostly on the weekend, but he can play during the week as a reward, if he does something commendable (like maintain high grades) or as a privilege (like if he has a friend over). Similarly, Stewie’s access to the family’s computer is password protected and Mrs. Daniels monitors Internet surfing. Mrs. Daniels scaffolds access to the Internet and personal technologies as coming of age opportunities.
Stewie, for instance, is not yet allowed to join Facebook (when he is 16 and if he seems entirely unlikely to ever post “his butt cheek,” he will be allowed to join) but Mrs. Daniels’ daughter, four years senior to Stewie, has a laptop and a smartphone (technologies Stewie will also gain access to when he is driving and going to college). Stewie’s sister and Mrs. Daniels had gone into their wireless carrier together and selected Droids after learning how to sync their smartphones with their other computing devices—Stewie’s sister, for instance, as long as she had her phone, would have access to all of her documents when she went off to college. Mrs. Daniels also used her technology skills to stay in the loop with what was happening in her son’s classes. For instance, she frequently consulted an online system that parents, students, teachers, and staff have access to—she can monitor whether her son was on time for his classes, his grades, whether he had been asked to leave a class, etc. Technology has a tangible panoptic function in Stewie’s life.

Co-Authorizing: Background Information from Mrs. Daniels

As a co-researching-participant, I considered Mrs. Daniels to be an embedded literacy researcher. I began considering Mrs. Daniels as a co-researcher after our first recruiting meeting, where she described the various interviews she conducted with her sister (who was a teacher), Stewie’s teachers from pre-school through 6th grade, and the experiments that she performed regarding her son’s odd or “improper” pencil grip. When teachers suggested to Mrs. Daniels that Stewie’s pencil grip was the reason why he was writing so slowly and why his script was so large, in addition to conducting informal interviews with Stewie’s teachers and her own sister, she also timed herself writing with the school-approved grip and with her son’s rogue grip.
I asked Mrs. Daniels how she felt about my characterizing her and describing her role in the project as researcher, she laughed and said seriously, “I’ve been doing research since Stewie was four.” At the time of our meetings, Mrs. Daniels’ research settings were the local middle school where her son was in eighth grade and a state college about two and a half hours away where her daughter was a first-year student living in the dorms. While my research and my dissertation focused specifically on writer as an in-flux, context-specific, socially constructed, plural identity and writing as school subject, as an everyday practice, and as a cultural icon, Mrs. Daniels’ research focus was broader though less visible. She often pressed me to keep in mind that the research that I was doing would be out-of-date a month from now—her son was a teenager with roaming interests, and every new grade level, every new teacher, changed everything—as such, I needed to account for the fact that the artifacts and opinions that Stewie provided were in-process, unstable, not frozen.

This section shares thee of many poignant anecdotes Mrs. Daniels offered as representative examples of the different kinds of educational battles Stewie has fought and was fighting at the time of our meetings. It is important to note here that Stewie did not focus his dialogue on critically evaluating his teachers or school curriculum—he simply accepted that school was about being forced to do things and wanted to show me what writing looked like and could be when students were allowed to creatively define writing in practice and develop content for writing assignments from their own legitimate interests. Similarly, it is also important to note that many of these anecdotes seem fringe to my research questions (what is writing, who are writers). However, these anecdotes were provided by Mrs. Daniels; she thought them necessary background information, descriptions of institutional context, descriptions that help writing
researchers and readers of this dissertation project better understand her son and especially his attitude toward school and his more abstract theories on writing and writers, and I agree.

Profile 1: Stewie is not a “people pleaser”

In math class, I looked at his [paper] and I said, “You have a zero on this—it’s an in-class thing, you have a zero”—and off to the side [the teacher] wrote nothing down. Stewie says, “she asked what we learned, we had to write one thing down that we learned—I didn’t learn anything, I know how to do PowerPoints.” I’m going, “just write anything down!” But, [Stewie argues], “she wanted to know if I learned anything and I didn’t, I gave her what she asked for.” And he got a zero on it. At that point, he should have gone to the teacher, [but] they have such a contentious relationship that for him to go “well, I didn’t learn anything,”—well, he would be sent to the office.

Profile 2: For Stewie, getting an “A” is about freedom

Talk to his sixth grade teacher—his sixth grade teacher loved him. He got all A’s, he was Johnny on the Spot, he loved her. She bought him a gift card for $20 at the end of the year because she had a classroom full of a lot of special needs [students]. Well, if [Stewie] was sitting there and he could see somebody get off page or whatever, he would just quietly take a step over, turn their page and point to where they were at. And, when they would get together in groups, there would always be the little boy that nobody wanted and Stewie would always invite him into their group… [Now,] fifth grade, we about flunked out, hated the teacher—the sixth grade teacher just gave him a little bit more freedom, just kinda let him do things in his own way, at his own pace and, you know, I understand that that
may not be how to the real world works, but let’s just say, Stewie is never going
to get a job (if he gets it he’ll never keep it) that is really really regimented, that
you have to have this in by 9 o’clock, this in by 10 o’clock, this in by…and
you’ve got to hurry up and get over here—but he’ll never get a job like that. You
pick what fits you, you pick what you’re good at. Even in college, [my daughter],
I was there one day and she says, “oh, I’ve got a test that I have to hurry up and
take,” whips out her computer and takes it, I say, “When’s it due,” [she responds,]
at eleven, and I’m like, “Okay honey, it’s like 10:30?” You know, so even then,
she got to pick and choose, she had a week to do this test, she chose to do it the
last half an hour. So yes, that’s…you do, you are usually able to pick. And, when
they put him [Stewie] in these situations…when everything’s timed and
everything is their way and it’s my way or the highway…

Profile 3: The real problem with visiting the principal’s office

Stewie got into a classroom and screwed around, duh, didn’t get his computer
turned on in time, she [the teacher] was coming over, he turns on his computer
and she says “that’s it,” turns off the computer and sends him down to the office
for the day and they did three projects on the computer that day so he got Fs on all
three. So I’m like, okay, really? [I go into the principal], I said, “if she can’t
handle her classroom…” and [the principal says] “don’t worry, the grade doesn’t
count for anything, and yea, she’s just a loser teacher”—that’s what the
principal’s telling my son and I.

At one point, Stewie overheard a story Mrs. Daniels was sharing with me and
commented; “you’re telling them I don’t get along with my teachers?” While Mrs. Daniels
readily accepted that these scenes—what I have described as back regions of Stewie’s theories of writing and writers—would not necessarily portray Stewie in a negative light to readers, Stewie was more tentative. I ask that readers keep in mind as they encounter anecdotes shared by Mrs. Daniels that these are moments Stewie himself might have kept private. Initially, in light of Stewie’s tone when he posed that question to his mother, I hesitated to include scenes from the principal’s office, in classrooms, and references to F’s. I eventually chose to include them here because these scenes are critical to understanding Stewie’s apparent apathy for school; for instance, why he would turn in a blank piece of paper to a teacher after learning the basics of Microsoft PowerPoint for the third or fourth time when she has asked him to write down what he learned in her class.

That the clever, kindhearted, and bright young man who exists in this project as a co-researching-participant finds himself at odds in certain kinds of classrooms has much to teach writing researchers and teachers. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank Stewie for his bravery in sharing both his finest and most tense encounters with learning and teaching.

**Learning to Write In-School**

When we began meeting, Stewie had just recently been to an Apple store to inquire about getting his iPod Touch repaired. It had crashed. In the crash, it had eaten a bit-by-bit story Stewie was working on (it was *Star Wars* inspired). He explained that this started when he came across the “Notes” option one day: “I just started typing it, I could take it [his iPod] anywhere and type on it.” When I asked him what kinds of places he found himself working, he responded: “Around 11 o’clock at night when I’m supposed to be in bed—[laughing…looks at mom…she says, “yea that’s true”]—If you look like at it [his iPod Touch], it will say, last entry: 1:30am.” However,
aside from this conversation, Stewie’s memories of reading and writing were primarily focused around what happened inside of school or what happened outside of school that was for school. For example, he remembers doing homework at the kitchen table. For the most part, he explained that this kind of reading and writing required that he read something on one side of a worksheet and then answer questions about what he read on the opposite side. He explained that the purpose of a lot of the writing he did at home for school was “to make sure you understand what you were reading.”

Stewie did not perceive this kind of writing as meaningful or particularly important for our work together, as such writing-for-the-purpose-of-reading-comprehension did not have much to do with his identity. I, however, found this kind of writing to be particularly relevant to our study. For instance, it is important that the writing that Stewie was asked to do for school was not meaningfully perceived, and similarly, that he felt that this kind of writing was not able to convey a sense of the individual writer. It is significant that Stewie asserts that the purpose of writing for school, in his experience, largely denies the presence of the writer as an individual, as a unique person. In Stewie’s experience, the purpose of writing was not to create new knowledge but instead to recreate, conform to, imitate, and parrot back known facts in a genre or form that makes the knowledge expressed easily quantifiable, thus, he concludes that this kind of writing cannot signify, represent, present a writer identity.

*Disciplining the Body*

What I found most striking about Stewie’s dialogue concerning writing and school was his tendency to describe learning to write as an embodied process. Though literacy researchers, and particularly those whose focus on gaming culture, have commented on the ease with which the body is left out of studies and conceptions of reading and writing—for instance, Camille
Utterback argues, “it is easy to forget the body whose eyes perceive the screen, and whose hands and fingers manipulate the mouse and keyboard” (218)—for Stewie, talking about writing is inseparable from talking about the body.

Simon Penny reminds us, “Repetitive and physical actions have been an integral part of education and socialization since preliterate times” (73-4), and Stewie’s narrative of learning to write in school clarifies what this looks like in contemporary times. The how-to-hold-your-writing-instrument-correctly debacle is one example from Stewie’s experiences that illustrates the embodied dimensions of writing instruction—and it is also the first example of Stewie’s resistance to embody what school has defined as the writer. For instance, the “issue” with Stewie’s pencil grip first emerged in pre-school. As Mrs. Daniels remembered, when she went to pick her son up from school he did not have any of the papers to take home and post on the fridge that the other students had. When she asked her son why not, he explained to her that his teachers told him he was not holding writing utensils the correct way. Rather than adjusting his grip, he simply chose not to write at all.

From preschool through sixth grade Stewie fought a battle with teachers over how to hold his pencil. Teachers told him that in order to write, one must hold his pencil a particular way. This violated Stewie’s experience—as he knew that he could write and hold his pencil any number of ways. Stewie would not adjust his writing grip, or, Stewie would not embody writer identity, as it was being defined by school. The self is embodied and “self-consciousness emerges through bodily differentiation rather than the other way around” (Giddens 56). Therefore, when writing teachers told Stewie he needed to change how he held a pencil to write, and when he refused, he refused not just to change how he held a pencil, not just, in some cases, to write, he also refused to be what they were asking him to be, a “writer.” As social theorist
Anthony Giddens suggests in his discussion of *Modernity and Self-Identity*, “Regularised control of the body is a fundamental means whereby a biography of self-identity is maintained; yet at the same time the self is also more or less constantly ‘on display’ to others in terms of its embodiment” (57-8). Thus, we see the inherent tension in constructing a writer identity for Stewie: from the very beginning, being a writer required that he embody a performance that contradicted his self-identity—to borrow Mrs. Daniels’ terms, “Stewie’s not a people-pleaser, he’s a Stewie-pleaser.”

From a very early age, Stewie seemed to display almost innate recognition of and reaction against what Bourdieu calls “the trick of pedagogic reason” (94). Stewie seemingly reacts against the way that pedagogy (how to hold your pencil) “extorts the essential while seeming to demand the insignificant.” As Bourdieu further explains: “in obtaining the respect for form and forms of respect which constitute the most visible and at the same time the best-hidden (because most ‘natural’) manifestation of submission to the established order, the incorporation of the arbitrary abolishes what Raymond Ruyer calls ‘lateral possibilities’” (Bourdieu 94-5). From his very earliest encounter with formalized schooling, Stewie refused to “submit to the established order,” he was disobedient, or perhaps even self-reliant. As a pre-school student, Stewie’s refusal to hold his pencil the established way, “the correct way,” was a stance against homogeneity. His current preference to not self-identify as a writer suggests that in his experience, writer is a homogenous identity, an identity that is socially controlled, one that requires obedience to a community which Stewie does not desire to be a participant within.

*Functional Literacy and the Indoctrination of Economic Efficiency*

Mrs. Daniels summarized the real problem teachers had with Stewie’s pencil grip: they felt that Stewie’s pencil grip was holding him back, it made him write slower than the other kids
and with larger script. The ideological dimensions of literacy learning, and particularly the economic dimensions, in this part of the narrative of Stewie’s educational encounters offer both a concrete and compelling example of what, exactly, it is that Stewie is resisting—becoming what Michel Foucault has theorized as a “docile body” (Foucault 135). Disciplinarity, argues Foucault, exercises power over the body in order to solicit efficiency (in Stewie’s case more text, less space) and obedience (school is the authority that determines what writing is and who can be a writer)—thus, the body is disciplined in school, or in writing classrooms, as both a normative and economic measure. I quote Foucault at length here to demonstrate the theoretical complexity that Stewie’s embodied narrative of learning to write offers literacy researchers:

The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely. What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that exploits it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A “political anatomy,” which was also a “mechanics of power,” was being born; it defined how one may have hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, “docile” bodies. (137-8)

What is more, following his explication of “docile bodies,” Foucault includes several images that demonstrate his point—and in between the images representative of the military and the
panopticon is a handwriting model (fig. 4.2), that is exactly the “pencil grip” that Stewie rejects (fig. 4.1).

Fig. 4.1. Stewie Demonstrating How He Holds a Pen Comfortably.


Stewie first remembers learning to write in the first grade, explaining that “it was kind of easier than reading but harder because you had to learn how to make letters.” He recalls learning to write by learning to trace letters—“in a little book there was a letter that was solid and then a dotted letter that you traced…” Listening to Stewie associate learning to write with learning handwriting, I commented: “I wonder how that’s going to change now…if people are going to be doing that anymore…if everyone is going to have computer screens?” Stewie’s response is
further evidence of his embodied understanding of writing. The difference between writing and typing, for Stewie, is the way that the body performs each action:

Stewie: I like that more than…writing. I like typing.

Me: How come?

S: I don’t know. I just don’t like holding a pencil. It hurts my hands.

M: When did you start typing?

S: Around 6th grade. I started typing a lot of stuff because that’s when we were allowed to start writing, or typing I mean.

M: So did you like to write before that…or was it kind of [inaudible]…

S: Not really, I never really liked to write, it just kinda, writing, just kinda gets tiring after a while.

M: What about it is tiring?

S: I don’t know just like reading the same really bad handwriting or…, and like, it just all being like really—I don’t like paper; I like computers more than, like, pieces of paper.

M: [inaudible] How come?

S: I don’t know.

M: What’s the difference for you?

S: I like digital stuff, I like stuff that I can like look at straight ahead. I don’t like to like have my head down all the time.

Though Stewie prefers writing with computers because writing with a pen or pencil is less comfortable, he also describes learning to type as an uncomfortable process, an encounter with bodily discipline, efficiency, and obedience.
He explained that he learned to type using a computer program called ATRT (*All The Right Type*)—he had started learning with this program in third grade in his school’s computer lab and had been required to use the program again for a mandatory typing class in seventh grade. He further explained that ATRT is a “site”: “it’s like a whole futuristic place and there’s buildings—here’s learning lab, here’s testing mode, here is this, and then here’s the final thing. You need to type everything on the keyboard and you have to do it in under 60 seconds, and it’s really hard.” The purpose of the typing class was “so you could learn how to type fast for a job and stuff.” Brandt has argued that “literacy is entangled with economic productivity” (*Literacy and Learning* 14) and Stewie’s story is an example of such tangling. For instance, the same teacher who teaches the typing class also teaches a course called “Financial Literacy.” Stewie explains, “she teaches students how to get jobs and be good with their money—not like waste it on a bunch of stuff.”

Stewie’s physical demonstration of what it looks and feels like to learn to type (fig. 4.3) emphasizes that learning to type is a bodily process that has to do with both obedience and economic efficiency—again, someone was telling him how he had to position his hands in order to produce script, again, there was only one correct way, and again, the point was so that he produced an adequate amount of text in a short time. I asked him if the way he learned to type in the class impacted how he typed now, he told me: “Not really because I kinda learned to type before then. I like to type looking at my fingers, but they give you this big black thing that goes over the keys and you have to look at the screen and type…I can’t do that. I can type faster if I look at the keys and I don’t mess up so…”
Stewie’s narrative about embodied writing instruction, again, parallels Foucault’s claims about the interwoven domains of disciplinarity and the economy in the construction of power:

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an “aptitude,” a “capacity,” which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination. (138)

Stewie’s experiences learning to write taught him that, to be a writer, one’s body needs to be trained to disregard comfort in favor of efficiency because writing or typing—literacy—is an economic skill. It is no surprise, then, that Stewie explains that while he considers himself to be someone who writes, or types, he does not consider himself to be a writer because he is not...
published and because writing is something he will never make any money doing (statements I attend to in greater detail later in this chapter).

Before moving on, I would like to accentuate what is missing from Stewie’s account of learning to write. His account is entirely focused on writing as mechanical skill. Though it is likely that Stewie’s history of learning to read and write encompassed more than skills instruction, it is the skills instruction that he remembers. This finding is important because it suggests that teaching writing as mechanical skill overrides all of the other reasons writing is taught, like as a way of thinking, understanding and challenging complex ideas, problem solving, creating, arguing, expressing, persuading, participating, changing the world. To borrow Selber’s terms, Stewie describes his literacy education in terms of functional technological skills—learning how to handle and use particularly tools to complete particular tasks—not critical, or rhetorical. The problem with this limited approach, as Selber indicates, is that it subverts students’ potential as “agents of change” (182). In 1987, Robert Brooke suggested that “the process of allowing a particular kind of identity to develop is what contemporary writing instruction is all about” (142). Stewie’s narrative urges writing teachers to question the uniform and obedient identity that embodied, skills-based, reading-comprehension-focused, easily assessed, quantifiable writing instruction and practice asks student writers to either accept or reject.

**Interactive Mapping**

Though Stewie does not call himself a writer, and though I am hesitant to ascribe an identity of writer to him, the writing that Stewie does that he identifies with presents Stewie as a designer, an arranger, a remixer, and an apprentice animator. These are the impressions that
Stewie’s writing make on me, as a reader. Thus, in my interactive mapping, I project these impressions, and construct various writer identities (and invite readers to construct various writer identities as well) for Stewie.

Ely has given attention to the complications of representing research participant stories and “data” in narrative research. She explains, “This business of creating forms that come closest to the essence of our understandings and presenting them in trustworthy ways is a crucial, ongoing, interactive dance” (568). In my narrative case study work with Stewie, this “interactive dance” was made more complicated because my representation of him drew on not only his own, but also his mother’s anecdotes and dialogue. It is my hope that re-presenting Stewie’s texts in figure 4.4—as interactive and digital, emerging out of and back into other activities he undertakes in his everyday life—both captures what it is that inspires Stewie to write and expands what Stewie has previously experienced as limited “possibilities for selfhood” (Ivanič).

Moving from the top of figure 4.4 to the bottom of figure 4.4, there are three groupings of artifacts. Positioned at the bottom (in the clouds), are artifacts that Stewie created because he wanted to (those he identified as representative of his writerly self). Positioned in the middle (the green line), are artifacts that Stewie created for school that he felt were still representative of who he was. Lastly, positioned at the top (behind bars), are artifacts that Stewie created for school that he felt were not representative of who he was because the content, form, and delivery were entirely determined by someone (or something) else.
Fig. 4.4. My Interactive Mapping or Digital Pastiche of Stewie’s Artifacts.
As Stewie suggested in our work together that certain artifacts that he has created are meant to be viewed on the screen, I have created videos to represent some of his texts in this mapping; click on the play buttons in figure 4.4 to be directed to YouTube.com to watch these videos. In re-presenting artifacts that represent who Stewie is (the bottom of fig. 4.4), under Stewie’s explicit direction, I used video composing to splice into the texts the activities and reflective dialogue that demonstrate what inspires Stewie to write, the intertextual histories and textures of these particular texts that facilitate and enable Stewie to identify with the writerly self that such texts suggest or perform.

A Theory of a Writing-Non-Writer

Stewie Daniels does not see himself as a writer. He does see himself as someone who writes, or more accurately types, but not as a writer. Having asked his own writing students to define writing and writers, Morris Young reflects on students’ willingness to assert “their right to determine what is acceptable as writing and who can be a writer” (60). While Stewie readily offered a definition of writing that was broad—writing, to him, referred to anything that someone did (other than speaking) in order to share stories or information, a non-oral, public, action—he placed definite restrictions on the identity writer.

To provide a view of what a broad definition of a writer might look like, I borrow from one of Young’s student responses: “A writer for me, is someone who jots down his thoughts and ideas. The whole idea of being a writer doesn’t have anythings [sic] to do with best-selling authors. I think everyone can be a writer if they want to” (64). In contrast, Stewie’s definition of a writer has everything to do with being published. He explains, “A writer is someone who writes a lot, and someone who writes is someone who just writes a little bit at a time.”
how efficiency comes into play. Stewie, ever since the issue of “improperly” holding his pencil, has been told that he was not successful because he did not produce as much text as fast as other people, and this belief was reinforced through his experience with ATRT in his typing classes.) When I asked Stewie why it was that he did not identify as a writer, did not call himself a writer, he had a straightforward reply: “I’m not published.”

I have already given attention to the economic ideology Stewie’s experiences with writing instruction imparted; however, Stewie’s response indicates that he has accepted the associative link between writing and the economy—the purpose of learning to write and learning to write “well” is to make money—therefore, it is not at all a leap to professionalize the identity. In the economy of literacy, to be a writer, one must be a professional writer. Here I outline further interconnected complications for Stewie seeing himself as a writer that emerged through talk, writing, and analysis during the case study.

Complication 1: “Qualifying” To Be A Writer

At different points in our meetings and in different modes, Stewie explained “writer” as an identity with several qualifications:

1. Time, Amount, and Mode—someone who is a writer must write often and must produce a large amount of text, book-length-texts, printed texts.

2. Experience and Exigency—someone who is a writer needs to have something to write about; something needs to have happened to them or they have to have done research; and, someone who is a writer cares enough about what happened to them or what they found in their research that they want to share it with other people.
Communication Style—someone who is a writer writes often and produces copious amounts of text because they enjoy doing so.

Readership—to be a writer, someone must be creative enough to be published and must be published enough to make a living.

Stewie places heavy demands on the identity writer. In addition to being published and getting paid to write, to be a writer, according to Stewie, one must have something significant to share, significant in that it is both interesting and carries a long page-length. To be a writer, one must be imaginative, and one must also experience writing, or understand writing as hobby, love, craft, talent:

Me: If somebody asked you, what is good writing, or, who is a good writer, what would you say? Who’s a good writer, how do you know if someone’s a good writer?

Stewie: Someone who has a very active imagination or someone who’s like a witness to something. Someone who does research to figure out something about a topic and expresses their feelings or, or like puts forth facts and stuff toward a story.

Me: So, like, um, someone who is really creative is a writer, um, what made you come to that conclusion?

Stewie: I don’t know, just like, no one who’s like really dull and doesn’t really care about anything, like someone who just like goes by stuff isn’t really a writer ‘cuz they don’t really care.
Though Stewie does not call himself a writer, he used very writerly words to describe his writing and himself as a writer in the questionnaire I asked him to complete—in fact, he describes himself as a creative writer using words like creative, imaginative, curious:

**Q10A:** If you had to pick three words that best describe you as a writer, what would those three words be?
- Creative
- Imaginative
- Curious

**Q10B:** If you had to pick three words that don’t describe you as a writer, what would those words be?
- Bored
- Unimaginative
- Uncreative

When I asked Stewie how he came to think of his writing in these ways he explained that this is how he heard other people talk about him, not necessarily his writing:

Me: So if you had to guess why you use those particular words or where you learned those particular words to talk about writing…[creative, imaginative, curious]

Stewie: They’re mostly words that I just thought of, thought of right now. Words that I’ve heard like parents and teachers and people say about me.

Me: And what kinds of situations do you hear people talking about you as a writer?

Stewie: Not even as a writer. Just out of the blue I just hear people say that I’m creative, imaginative, and sometimes curious.

Similarly, he explained to me during several of our meetings that when he wrote at home, he wrote because he wanted to, because he was bored, “to pass the time.” He also took on large writing projects—not short stories but stories that he worked on for months, entire years.
Pairing these moments with Stewie’s qualifications for taking on the identity “writer”—and weighty qualifications they are—Stewie is still only two short: he is not published (his use of “published” suggested hardcopy publication), and writing is not Stewie’s preferred communication style (he told me he would rather talk, and his selective archive shows that his writing is often multimodal and digital, animated text and images, not something to be read in a hardcopy book).

**Complication 2: “Impression” and “Projection”—less In-School**

Without experiencing publication (being read, performing as a writer for a reader), “the expression he gives” when Stewie writes or types, has no opportunity to make an “impression” (Goffman 2). The self is a social construction—we know ourselves based on how others know us. Stewie suggests this as well, for instance, characterizing himself as a writer based on how he has heard other people talk about him in general. However, without a venue for publication, a stage to perform on as a writer, Stewie has no readership, no audience, and therefore, no opportunity to construct a writerly self—i.e. how do people talk about Stewie’s writing, what is its impression?

But what of the classroom, the teacher who collects, reads, and marks his in-school texts, you might ask. Is she not an audience, a reader? The answer, unfortunately, is no. That answer is no because the writing that Stewie does that he self-identifies with is often never read by teachers. Like Schultz’s research participants, the writing that Stewie does outside of school—writing that Stewie identified as representative of who he is as someone who writes and not the someone he is supposed to be according to state standards, rubrics, and templates—never makes it into school. Thus, Stewie can project a writerly self (imaginative, creative, curious) into his out-of-school texts, but he has limited opportunities to do so when composing for school. Even
though, as the “Alien Animation” and “The Box” PowerPoints demonstrate, Stewie is more than willing and able to project this imaginative, creative, and curious identity into his school composing, a few assignments a year that allow for this identity-building is not adequate to transform his understanding or perception of who can be a writer.

Not involved in any extracurricular writing activities and not allowed to participate in online writing spaces, Stewie’s opportunities to define and experience writing are largely influenced by what happens in school. His opportunities to compose for school are often limited to fill-in-the-blank, read and respond, or template-based experiences. Thus, school does not allow Stewie to develop “projective identities” (Keller et al. 83), which, in part, helps to explain why he is hesitant to identify as a writer—he has no practice or experience massaging in-school writing assignments in ways that would allow him to perform as himself rather than as a self rigidly defined by the immovable structure provided and predetermined by his teachers (and as my school observation and collection of documents further suggests, predetermined by the third parties who create and sell workbooks).

Stewie seems to be distrustful of unreliable readers or audiences—he does not trust his teachers, the people who are the primary audience for his writing.

Stewie: I’m…someone who writes.

Me: Someone who writes, which is different than a writer?

Stewie: Yea...in my eyes.

Me: I’m interested in that, in that difference, because a lot of people think that but not a lot of people kind of talk about why they think that. What influenced you, if you had to kind of sit and think about it for a little bit…what would you guess
caused you to kind of start to make that differentiation between, well a writer, writes novels and gets published and…

Stewie: I dunno, just kind of like the way like people talk and stuff about writers and people and…stuff…teachers always say that you’re a writer but…I don’t believe them.

Me: Why not?

Stewie: I don’t know, I just feel like not everyone can be a writer.

Me: Not everyone can be a writer…so talk to me a little bit about like the context, um, the situation where teachers would be calling you or maybe your classmates writers, that you’re kind of…

Stewie: When you like have to write a story and they say like “oh, well, everyone’s a writer” well, not everyone really is (laughs).

Me: So where’d you, where’d that idea come from though do you think?

Stewie: I don’t know around like 5th, 6th, 7th grade, not so much this year but those part few years I can remember teachers telling the class that and (laughs) no one really believing it.

Stewie’s distrust of teachers, and particularly his distrust of the identities schools and teachers ascribe to students (like writer), comes from a history of conflict with teachers.

As Novitz has acknowledged:

[O]ne’s self-image or identity is action-guiding. As a result, any construal of one’s actions which challenges one’s sense of self, which suggests, say, that one is less than efficient or intelligent, has the potential to inhibit one’s behavior and will be the cause of some consternation. People whose self-image is challenged in
this way will generally defend themselves against such accusations—either by regarding, say, their inefficiency as momentary and untypical, or else by denying the charge altogether and by attempting to explain it away. (151)

As many of the opening anecdotes from Mrs. Daniels suggest, teachers are prone to perceive Stewie as a “disruptive” student—when he does not get his computer turned on in time, when he does not respond appropriately (as expected) to an assignment, or even, when he has fun in their classrooms. What Novitz calls the “self-image” is regularly challenged by Stewie’s experiences in school—he has not “one charge” to deny but a consistent charge that who he is, how he acts, and how he communicates himself, particularly as someone who likes to make people laugh, is not acceptable. As a matter of survival, Stewie has become accustomed to denying how teachers interpret his actions; thus, it is entirely understandable why he so easily and overtly rejects the attempt of his teachers to identify their students as writers.

Further, in Stewie’s experience, writer is an identity prescribed to students by teachers (the same people who tell him there is only one correct way to hold one’s pencil). “Writer,” in Stewie’s experience, has been homogenous—for instance, a teacher telling every single student in her room “you’re all writers” at the same time. Shirley Brice Heath’s research focusing on how arts education functions outside of school emphasizes that in order for adolescents to take on identities as artists, they need opportunities to differentiate themselves from others. Everyone cannot do the same thing in the same way; it is simply not how things get done. Heath explains the importance of arts-differentiation: “The assumption of role and a sense of membership within a community of people with similar roles enable individuals to take up different stances toward learning one or another aspect, component, or set of skills associated with a coming performance or production” (339). Stewie’s commentary about how teachers tell students they are writers,
indicates the importance of Heath’s findings—an essential component of identity-work is having the opportunity to define oneself both as a part of and in contrast to a community of people. In Mrs. Daniels’ view, at the center of her son’s relationship with writing is his resistance to “restriction.” In a room full of 25 students, if everyone is “a writer”—the same kind of writer, writer as a unified identity—one can see how “writer” might come to be interpreted as a homogenous identity, a restrictive identity and thus one that Stewie readily rejects self-identifying with.

Complication 3: “Impression” and “Projection”-less Out-of-School

It is important not to overlook the fact that Stewie engages in remix culture—as evidenced by his incorporation and repurposing of Toy Story and The Walking Dead in his PowerPoints. As I briefly mention earlier, Internet access and access to personal computing technologies are age-restricted in the Daniels house. For example, Stewie was particularly perturbed that he was not yet allowed to join Facebook. So, for instance, while Gee praises the abilities of videogames, even the killing kind like Call of Duty, to engage people in processes of literate identity fashioning (What Video Games 27), because Stewie is denied full access because of his age and because of a very real concern that his parents have about safety and the Internet, his potential to engage with others, in the process of identity projection, public performance, or, publication, is limited. Guy Merchant, in his study of children’s development of identities in informal digital writing, clarifies how Stewie’s limited Internet access also limits his literate self-identity development:

Popular electronic communication provides plenty of opportunity for identity work, through multiple and complex interactions with familiar and unfamiliar audiences, and it is in this way that the idea of performing identity becomes
salient, not least because the acts of performance require an audience. Identity performance becomes important in digital communication when we wish to establish relationships with those whom we have little or no face-to-face contact with, particularly where words on a screen are all we have to work with. This suggests a way of looking at identity as contingent, multiple, and malleable, a move away from the fixed identities associated with industrial and pre-industrial society. (303)

Merchant suggests (as does Robert Brooke; Jeff Grabill and Stacy Pigg; and John Jones) that communing with strangers online is a one way that adolescents can learn to develop flexible identities or gain rhetorical agency. This kind of informal participation, regardless of its textual qualities, argue such scholars, prepares people to participate in a world that increasingly demands what Gee calls “shape-shifting portfolio people,” or, people who are able to assess situations and “define themselves anew (as competent and worthy) for changed circumstances” by creatively repurpose their “skills, experiences, and achievements” (Situated Language 105).

Similarly to Stewie’s remixing of scenes from Toy Story and The Walking Dead, he also toys with fan fiction—the Star Wars inspired novel he was typing late at night on his iPod Touch. Such writing does not make it into Stewie’s classrooms and is not valued in his educational context as writing (he learns to write with computers in “computer class” or in “financial literacy”—not in his English class). It is clear from a number of the anecdotes that this narrative has re-told that Stewie has inconsistent access to writing mentorship in school and that he often feels like school has nothing to do with his real interests. Both of these are serious roadblocks preventing him from even wanting to see himself as a writer. That could change, for
instance, if his *Star Wars* inspired story were posted to a fan site—which would also mean that his work would not have been lost and gobbled up when his iPod Touch crashed.

A fan site seems an ideal space for Stewie’s composing practices to both develop and be fully appreciated. He is interested in writing about things that interest him, he is interested in engaging in a remix culture—something Jenkins equates with artistic apprenticeship (190)—so such an environment seems ideal. However, the prevalence of alphabetic text on fan sites falls short of the multimodal and digital mentoring and publishing that Stewie’s works are deserving of. There are still more options though. For instance, what if Stewie had a YouTube account, and like I did, used a basic video editing program to convert his PowerPoints into video files—video files which he could upload to YouTube and then link to through his Facebook page, projecting a writerly self and anticipating the impression that Facebook’s “comment” and “like” features readily make available? Such an activity, a practice, in my view, would readily support Stewie to take on a self-identity as a writer (or a designer, etc.). For instance, Stewie currently describes himself as a writer based on how other people talk generally about who he is as a person. The informal publication opportunities available online—just a few of which I have mentioned here—would give Stewie the opportunity to describe himself as a writer based on how people talked about the new media texts he cleverly and painstakingly designs.

However, when I shared my optimistic conclusions with Stewie and his mother, questioning if, indeed, access to Facebook and YouTube would encourage him to “publish online,” he informed me that even with access to such spaces, he would be unlikely to share his work with a broader audience (audience members outside of his family members or myself, who by this point in time he had taken to emailing attachments of his latest creations). Stewie explained that he “doesn’t really feel the need to” share his work with a broader audience. Again,
in order to self-identify as writers, it is critical for people to have experience being read as writers by other people, and again, even though the tools exist to enable a large majority of people to publically participate as writers, not everyone will actually participate. The issue of crafting a writer identity is more complex than simply access and opportunity—at the heart is exigency.

Complication 4: The Writer As Creative, Print-Based Author

If restriction is part of what causes Stewie to distance himself from writing, it is also significant that in talking about writers, Stewie often implied that writers are creative writers. He implicitly suggested that the identity writer is inextricably linked with the identities author, print-based author, and creative author:

Me: Who would you call a writer?

Stewie: Someone who writes books

Me: Someone who writes books, anyone else?

Stewie: Not really, just like those types of people.

In light of the “inspired” pieces of writing Stewie creates that were shared in figure 4.4, it is no wonder Stewie does not self-identify as a writer. The majority of Stewie’s inspired pieces are not primarily relying on alphabetic text—like the “Alien Abduction” and “The Box” PowerPoints—and some, like the “Zombie Ambush” PowerPoint, do not use alphabetic text at all. If being a writer means that you are publishing alphabetic texts, novels—what Stewie seems to suggest constitutes a writer—then, it is also clear why Stewie resists such a self-identity: it is too restrictive and certainly does not include or account for the digital and animated texts he creates, enjoys creating, and spends copious amounts of time perfecting.
That Stewie can only imagine a writer as a published, creative, print-based author, suggests that he has no experience reading blogs, websites, television programs, movies, videogames, as texts, as writing. This implicates the school in the maintenance of an autonomous (print-based) model of literacy. As an example of how such learning influences how Stewie imagines a writer, figure 4.5 offers a visual definition of a writer provided by Stewie. The full screenshot depicts what came up in Stewie’s Google search using the word “writer,” and the enlarged image is the image he selected.

![Fig. 4.5. The April 11, 2012 Results of Stewie's Google Search for "Writer."](image)

Linda Brodkey’s description of the scene of writing comes to mind again. Notice how this writer (in fig. 4.5) is working in isolation. However, Stewie’s definition of a writer is also clarified by this image—note, for instance, the professional attire of this writer and the fact that he is not working at a computer. Contrasting this image with the tools that Stewie uses to write and the mixed media creations featured earlier in this chapter, it is clear why Stewie would resist seeing himself as a writer when this paper-based man is who he imagines a writer to be.
Complication 5: The Tension Between Creativity and Conformity

Stewie describes writing as a thin line between something you want to do and something that you have to do. He talked about and shared examples of his own writing that were entirely determined by school. He explained that in such instances he wrote solely because he had to get a grade, practice for an exam, pass a class, show respect for a teacher. He also talked about and shared examples of his own writing that he was doing outside of school, because he felt like it—bored, too hot to kick a soccer ball around outside, not allowed to spend any additional time playing video games. The artifacts that he shared that fell in the middle—things he created for school that he poured himself into creating, writing—were most representative of how Stewie theorized writing, as something that is inherently experienced by the writer as a tension between conformity (to a particular context, in response to a particular assignment, for a particular...
purpose, and for a particular audience) and creativity (the freedom to experiment, the freedom to re-imagine and re-interpret particular assignments, the freedom to redefine what it means to be a writer in a particular context and for a particular audience).

This practical tension that Stewie articulates is also a well-established theoretical tension inherent in writing for writers, particularly for revolutionary writers or writers who are trying to create something new, who are trying to write outside of what has already been lauded as “literature.” Roland Barthes describes this tension as “an impetus of a break and the impetus of coming to power” (87). Stewie’s resistance, his self-reliance, his desire to not participate in a homogenous system of literacy, education, that restricts and demands conformity, is the desire for, the need for, a writing degree zero that cannot exist. As Barthes explains:

   In front of the virgin sheet of paper, at the moment of choosing the words which must frankly signify his place in History, and testify that he assumes its data, he observes a tragic disparity between what he does and what he sees. Before his eyes, the world of society now exists as a veritable Nature, and this Nature speaks, elaborating living languages from which the writer is excluded: on the contrary, History puts in his hands a decorative and compromising instrument, a writing inherited from a previous and different History, for which he is not responsible and yet which is the only one he can use. Thus is born a tragic element in writing, since the conscious writer must henceforth fight against ancestral and all-powerful signs which, from the depths of a past foreign to him, impose Literature on him like some ritual, not like a reconciliation. (86)

Stewie’s “Zombie Ambush” PowerPoint is a concrete example of the very struggle Barthes articulates. Stewie’s interested in The Walking Dead—the television series and the
comic books. Seeing the comic books, he is inspired to create his own. Preferring to write with a computer, he takes up his metaphoric pen, sits down to create a 48-hour PowerPoint depicting a few men struggling with axes and clunky shotguns against a mob of green-headed zombies. He wants to write a zombie story, his page is the computer screen, his instrument is Microsoft PowerPoint. With his incredible attention to detail, Stewie asks readers to imagine the story, envision the moving story implied by the static shape-created images—and we can—but we might also see the limitations of the program and how the program, like school in some of Stewie’s other writerly artifacts, affects the piece, impinges upon Stewie’s creativity, his freedom. Microsoft PowerPoint is the “decorative and compromising instrument” Barthes refers to. We see how Stewie subverts the program designed for presentations that combine alphabetic texts and images; we experience Stewie’s *fight against ancestral and all-powerful signs which, from the depths of a past foreign to him, impose Literature on him like some ritual, not like a reconciliation*. As Mitchel Resnick has argued, and as Stewie demonstrates, “Today’s youth are ready and eager to do more with computers. We need to provide the hardware and software that will enable them to do so” (35).

It is my hope that in Stewie’s inspired artifacts readers experience this writing non-writer “hasten[ing] towards a dreamed-of language whose freshness, by a kind of ideal anticipation, might portray the perfection of some new Adamic world where language would no longer be alienated” (Barthes 88). It is, therefore, not problematic that Stewie does not self-identify as a writer. Rather, it is problematic that the institution through which he is taught writing, taught the identity writer, alienates him, the writing revolutionary, from an empowering vision of what writing can be and who writers can be.
Conclusion

This case study—Stewie’s story—suggests that in order to open writing to our students’ own experiences and the identity writer to our students’ own identities we simply need to (1) allow students to write about what interests them, (2) allow students to write with media that suit their communication styles, interests, and reading spaces, and (3) create opportunities for publication and develop readerships. What seems so simple is complex, for instance, this would mean teachers would need to reimagine writing and writers as well—reimagine History—based on their students’ experiences, interests, preferences, and talents; schools would need to provide access to tools and training to support the re-imaginings of writing by students immersed in a mass-multiliterate society; and the standards would need to rethink their current content-driven, reading-comprehension-based, easily-objectively-assessed demonstrations of learning.

It is highly unlikely that writing and writers can be reimagined (from that frumpy glasses-clad, middle-aged man, scribbling alone at his small desk) if English classrooms in primary and secondary schools teach writing exclusively as correct bodily form and fill-in-the-blank (no need to think beyond the boxes, lines, and spaces provided) and predominantly as regurgitation (What did you just read? What language and literary devices were utilized?), and if both continue to read only printed texts, setting them up as the only model of “authorship.” Similarly, if students enter colleges and Universities, submitting 12-point font, 5-paragraph admissions essays and get through the two-year-required composition sequence on non-controversially presented arguments about air conditioning in the dorms, expanded parking lots, researched using the Times and the print-based database of academic sources the library subscribes to, writing and writers will remain limited, restricted, exclusive, and most importantly, the revolutionary writing writing-non-writers like Stewie are engaging with will remain hidden, silent. With such silence, the
identities and histories of the students in writing classrooms also remain hidden, and so too the potential to disrupt the cyclic and self-reinforcing vigilance of an autonomous model of literacy learning and teaching.

The effect may not be so terrible if students are like Stewie and do not draw identities from teacher-comments or grades—but if they are primary students, perhaps their writing will die out in high school when they gain access to personal technologies and can consume a vast amount of data and entertainment without the self-confidence or experience to utilize such technologies both as publishing platforms for their own creations and as platforms to critique and provoke change. A democratic culture of participation by written communication is at risk. As Jenkins argues, consumers become powerful if and when “they recognize and use that power as both consumers and citizens, as full participants of our culture” (270).

As chapter 6 addresses how writing classrooms, assignments, and assessments can open people’s ideas of writing and writers, I will not detail here the changes and approaches myself, Stewie, and Mrs. Daniels recommend to achieve such goals. As a last note before moving into chapter 5, Corrinne’s narrative case study, Stewie’s narrative provides a powerful example of why changes in literacy instruction and in the ways media are valued and treated in formalized educational settings is not enough. As Jenkins has acknowledged, “Media are read primarily as threats rather than as resources. More focus is placed on the dangers of manipulation rather than the possibilities of participation, on restricting access—turning off the television, saying no to Nintendo—rather than in expanding skills at deploying media for one’s own ends, rewriting the core stories our culture has given to us” (270). Parents, like Mr. and Mrs. Daniels, are justified in their reservations about what their children can do online, who they can encounter online. There are certainly very real and embodied dangers and consequences of online participation. Even
still, as I think Stewie’s narrative suggests, parents—not just teachers and schools—need “advice on how they can help their kids build a meaningful relationship with media” (Jenkins 270). Mrs. Daniels suggests that, in Stewie’s case, such advice might most effectively be filtered through a soccer coach, for instance, who recommended useful sites or forums to parents and players. Mrs. Daniels’ suggestion reinforces Shirley Brice Heath’s emphasis on the importance of intimate strangers in her recent manuscript *Words at Work and Play*, like coaches and other kinds of youth organization leaders, in “socializing youth into appreciating what [is] meant by having a professional identity in community organizations and taking part in public events” (49). Stewie already uses Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to track teammates’ names and jersey sizes and numbers—what if the soccer team had a blog or website or listserv maintained by players? It is important for people who study and teach writing to extend our understanding of the writing assignment or writing classroom if we are to engage the identities that writing students, writers, willingly bring to potential writing situations.
I like to imagine that I’m a writer. I’m not a professional writer but I hope that I’m getting there. “A Writer” seems a lot bigger than me right now, but in the simplest sense, I write, therefore I am – a writer.

Corrinne Burns, Writer’s Questionnaire Response, April 4, 2012

I had no further plan and I [had] no idea where I was, so I began to run towards the most tree populated area, guessing, and hoping that it was further from the civilization that I was expected to head towards. My shoes were not made to run but they kicked away at the fighting dirt, propelling me onward...

Trinity Smith’s thoughts as she tries to escape her male captor and a “civilization” that meant her father and her family’s social position determined her betrothed rather than her own head and heart, The Sweetest Rum by Enni C. Leowly, pp. 113-14

The last chapter contemplated how and why Stewie Daniels did not think of himself as a writer. This chapter is driven by a narrative investigation of how Corrinne Marie Burns came to take on the identity “writer.” Kevin Roozen argues that “researchers need to follow participants’ mappings of relevant activities, regardless of how different they seem or how distant they are temporally” (“Tracing Trajectories” 367). Thus, in this chapter I have overlapped dialogue and anecdotes from meetings between Corrinne and myself, her questionnaire responses, artifacts from her archive, and the writing that she and her sister contributed to the chapter in order to provide a narrative map, indexed with artifacts, of “relevant activities” for Corrinne’s development of a self-identity as a writer. It is not the “full” story or the only story; it is one annotated version.
Chapter Outline

I begin the chapter with demographic information and continue, detailing the ways that Corrinne defined writers, writing, and writer identity. I preface Corrinne’s literacy narratives at home, in school, and online with this information in order to contextualize key terms or concepts of my dissertation project on her terms and in her experience. Corrinne’s dialogue about writing, writers, and writer identity frame or provide a foundation for her own story of coming to be a writer, or coming to take on and develop a self-identity as a writer. Her dialogic conceptualizations of these terms (writing, writer, writer identity) are a way of understanding what she has experienced, recognized, and accepted as “socially available possibilities for selfhood” (Ivanič) in writing.

Corrinne maintains a somewhat traditional, text-based, or alphabetic conception of writing. For example, as a writer, Corrinne is primarily a novel-writer. Just as Stewie’s definition of writing was broad, incorporating his writing practices as writing, Corrinne’s definition of writing was built around her writing practices and presentations as well. A critical component of her coming to understand herself as a writer, for instance, was dependent upon her understanding her role (Heath “Strategic Thinking”) in creating stories with family and with friends—she was the writer (who used words) and they were the illustrators (who used pictures).

Corrinne primarily understands writers as people who enjoy what they are doing and as people who would indeed call themselves writers. She also indicated that exigency or purpose for writing was an important determinant for someone calling him or herself a writer. For example, Corrinne felt that, most of the time, people who only wrote for school would not qualify as writers. This particular distinction builds off of her own resistance to school-based writing because at the time of our conversations, she felt her first-year writing course was
For Corrinne, in theory, regardless of whether writing for work or play, writing elicits pleasure and joy from a writer. Corrinne is not concerned that the majority of her classmates who email, text, tweet, and Facebook hourly do not consider themselves as writers because not everyone actually is a writer. For her, writer identity is exclusive, based on the ways that the person writing experiences the activity. Writer identity is also exclusive in another sense as well; for instance, writers, like herself, do not want anybody who does any kind of writing, who only follows someone else’s rules, and who is motivated to write by any reason to call him or herself a writer.

As she does call, see, and think of herself as a writer, this opening section contextualizes the very basics: how Corrinne defines writing, how she defines writer, and how she understands writer identity. It allows readers to understand, in a very general sense, what it is that Corrinne must be doing and being in order to be able to see herself as a writer. The section that follows provides the histories of these assertions, the embodied actions performed by Corrinne across different writing environments that provide a history of herself being and becoming a writer.

I have separated Corrinne’s literacy narrative into spaces: at home, in school, and online. I do so not to polarize these spaces and construct false binaries (Street, Heath) but to recognize that each of these spaces functions as a distinct community. It is my hope that the separation of these not always easily demarcated spaces or communities will in turn emphasize common processes of or approaches to writing and identification that Corrinne adopts across interactive communities or affinity spaces (Gee). Corrinne’s dialogue about learning to read and write at
home, in school, and online circled back to three similar points: (1) people read and write to have fun and to entertain themselves and each other, (2) people read and write so that they can share their work with others, and (3) people read and write together, as families, as classmates, as peers, as friends, as teachers and students, etc. Reading and writing were activities that shared a close relationship throughout my work with Corrine—in the ways that she theorized about writing, writers, and writer identity and in the anecdotes she shared from her autobiographical history.

As I share details from Corrinne’s oral history of learning to read and write, I also spend time on particular experiences and texts that she identified as significant. For instance, I focus on certain practices in her family that, upon reflection, Corrinne noted that she cherished and felt lucky to have had, and I also focus on certain documents from school that she categorized separately from all of her other school-produced texts or pointed to as assignments that she felt allowed her to be herself. I do so not only to highlight best practice literacy learning and teaching strategies—in one particular student’s opinion—but also to highlight significant events that enabled Corrinne, or gave her the authority to present herself as a writer in my study, even as she was simultaneously having difficulty passing her first-year writing courses.

In their 2005 article in *Written Communication*, Amy Burgess and Roz Ivanič added the concept of timescales to Ivanič’s “clover leaf” model of writer identity, arguing that:

> If the socially available possibilities for selfhood a writer has experienced are ones in which she is treated as inferior and does not have an authoritative role, she is likely to incorporate a sense of inferiority, and possibly feelings of indignation at having been treated in this way, into her autobiographical self. Her sense of inferiority is likely to have strong influence on the kind of authorial self she
constructs and may lead her to be hesitant about engaging in writing at all, as writing is by its nature an agentive social act... (246)

Though at the time of our meetings Corrinne was facing a particular writing context (her first-year writing sequence) that she felt was treating her and her writing as inferior—allotting “No Passes” or “Low Passes” to her papers—she was able to draw authority from other writing contexts, those from her past and those from her present that were extracurricular, in order to derive the authority to continue seeing and thinking of herself as a writer—to project herself as a writer to herself.

One of the most important of these “other” contexts is the Web, and particularly, National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). In dialogue, Corrinne framed her participation in NaNoWriMo (since 2009) as the most important sponsor of her writing and her identity as a writer. Corrinne’s participation in NaNoWriMo was the result of her active reading practices; for instance, she participated on fan fiction sites, where people her age who were reading the same novels as she and (over)(re)writing them introduced her to and encouraged her to try her hand at NaNoWriMo. Her participation provided her with mentorship (via the website and from professional writers), a community of support (via the website’s forums and outreach activities likes face-to-face write-ins), motivation (via deadlines, certificates, and publication codes), and perhaps most importantly, the opportunity to self-publish her work, to see her novels bound, available for sale on Amazon.com, and in turn, purchased by friends and family members and reviewed on the site as well.

Through classroom publishing opportunities and online writing activities, Corrinne began to write with pennames and by taking on personas. For instance, she and her classmates developed goofy pennames and personas for themselves when creating class-wide or school-
wide publications, and she uses a variety of handles on her web spaces (some of which include Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Booksy, and Figment) with semi-real or semi-future profiles that reveal as much about who she is becoming, wants to become, and will be as who she is right now. These practices fundamentally inform her self-identity as a writer or the creation of Enni C. Leowly—the name with which she signs much of her publicly available work with. She explains: “it’s the last four letters of my first name backwards, and then the C because my name starts with a C, and then Leowly is yellow all mixed up because that’s my favorite color.”

Moving into the next section of the chapter, I present readers with identity sketches provided by Corrinne. In sketching her self-identity as a writer, she juxtaposed “the writer” in between two other identities she playfully imagines for herself in her day-to-day activities, “the socialite” (the friend) and the “secret agent” (the people watcher). To draw on language from Dan McAdams chapter on identity and life stories in Royn Fivush’s and Catherine A. Haden’s *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self: Developmental and Cultural Perspectives*, writer is one of several “imagoes” or “protagonists” that Corrinne has created for herself in her “identity work” (McAdams 193). Corrinne’s sketches literally illustrate how her psychosocial self is beginning to “resolve” the “‘one-in-many-selves paradox’” (McAdams 193), and her writing processes, her strategies of invention in her novel-writing, facilitate this identity work. As Anthony Paul Kerby has pointed out, “rather than living their lives with a central meaning-giving thread, many people tend to live, to borrow a term from Deleuze, a ‘rhizomatic’ life, a life of partitions and segments” (129). For instance, writer is one of many socially informed identities that Corrinne imagines for herself, personifies, and moves between; it is one of multiple identities rather than the central kernel of her identity that
somehow needs to inform all of her other identities and her artifact pictures this or re-presents this for readers.

I conclude the chapter by reviewing essential experiences and practices that seemed to have nurtured and encouraged Corrinne to take on a self-identity as a writer.

**Demographic Information**

Corrinne Marie Burns is 17-years-old. She has lived in Northwest Ohio her entire life. When we first started meeting, Corrinne was a high school senior, though in order to graduate all she needed to do was pass the second writing course sequence at BGSU. She had been taking college courses since her junior year in high school. In fall of 2013, she will be 18 years old and a junior in college. A middle child, she has an older sister who is majoring in Visual Communications Technology at BGSU and a younger brother who, though enrolled in the Ohio Virtual Academy, will begin taking classes at BGSU in fall 2013 at the age of 15. Corrinne’s parents are both math teachers—her mother at Bowling Green State University. Her father teaches at the Ohio Virtual Academy, following a long tenure teaching at a local Catholic high school where his technological savvy was oft drawn upon.

The Burns family is Catholic, and the children have mostly been educated in private schools. The year we began meeting was the first year the children were enrolled in a public school. Corrinne’s archive emphasized the importance of faith-based communities and activities: included were artifacts from Sunday school, bible study, and a church-based youth leadership camp. The Burns children participate in a variety of extracurricular activities outside of church as well. Corrinne, for instance, was on the track team and the debate club in high school, and all three siblings participated in 4-H projects during summer, hoping to compete at the local and
then state fair. Corrinne’s older sister had a summer job, something she herself was also on the lookout for.

Corrinne’s sister graduated valedictorian from her high school, her brother skipped the first grade, was currently ranked number 2 out of 12,000 at the Virtual Academy he was attending, and, over summer (2012), had enrolled with his father in a computer coding course at BGSU. Corrinne, on the other hand, though she calls herself an “A student” and though this is mostly true, cares less about grades than her siblings. Corrinne’s approach to learning and school does not have much to do with wanting to get a good grade, and she remarked at several points that if she were not interested in a course, she could care less about her grade in it: “I’ve always gotten bad grades in math and science…it’s not like I’m not good at it, I’m just not interested, so I don’t bother studying and my mind doesn’t bother to retain that stuff…I think my parents are happy as long as I don’t get any real Cs.” She explained at one point, “I’m just as smart as my brother and my sister but if you look [at] their grades and stuff, they would appear so much smarter because they play by the rules I guess—they’re like rule followers and I’m not so much a rule follower.” For Corrinne, unlike Stewie, her non-rule-following identity does not deter her from seeing herself as a writer.

**On Writers, Writing, and Writer Identity: Corrinne’s Perspectives**

When my Writer’s Questionnaire asked Corrinne, a voracious reader and fiction writer, to write about what came to mind when she thought of writing, she thought immediately of fiction writing and people, writers, who love what they do, travel to faraway places for research, and who frequent artsy coffee shops. However, as she was enrolled in the mandatory first-year writing sequence at BGSU and also knew that I was one of the graduate students who had at one
point taught this sequence, she also immediately thought of “GSW writing.”

1 Though she has had access to and been comfortable with using a computer for about as long as she can remember—“I’ve always had a computer around because my dad is a computer guy”—Corrinne’s dialogue or theorizing about writing referred mainly to alphabetic text. For instance, though she felt that pictures could accompany writing and help to tell a story, they were not writing: writing referred to the words, perhaps the words that described the picture.

There were distinct differences between how she thought of writing when left to her own devices and how the context of her current school environment at the time made her think of writing:

When I think of writing, it’s the fictional kind. I think of novelists in lofty coffee shops or doing research in Antarctica. I think of happy people that enjoy what they’re doing and don’t think of it as a task. I also think of boring writing though, like GSW and research papers, which are fun to envision but not so fun when it comes to following a strict formula. I think of people like teachers with big earrings or writers with messy buns and a 5 o’clock shadow. Also, famous authors, Jane Austen, Suzanne Collins, JRR Tolkien.

At a later date, she explained further what she meant when she referred to GSW-writing as formulaic and boring: “The thing that bothers me about GSW is that you have to follow specific formulas and stuff.” For her, it was formulaic because how writing was taught in the course and how it was assessed by her teachers was based upon how the paper was organized, and how her

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1 General Studies Writing (GSW) is the first-year-writing program at Bowling Green State University. The program is run separately from the English department and students are required to pass or test out of two courses. Enni uses GSW to refer to general studies academic writing, where general academic writing is qualified as traditional papers strictly structured according to rhetorical aims (arguing with sources, arguing for a position, speculating about causes, etc.—see also, *The St. Martin’s Guide to Writing, Short 9th Edition*) and is valued based on an complex handbook-indexed rubric (see *A Writer’s Resource, 3rd Edition* special compilation for Bowling Green).
argument and paragraphs were physically structured, rather than how it read, what it said, or its argument. Though the kind of writing that her particular school environment asked her to do was technically writing, for Corrinne, because it asked the writer to create within a particular structure, a formula, it turned writing into a math problem, which was not, in fact, actually writing.

*Dialogue About Writing*

These two sides of writing—the creative and fictional kind of writing and the first-year-based or what Corrinne most often terms “formulic” kind of writing—dominated both how she wrote about writing on the Writer’s Questionnaire and how she talked about writing throughout the course of our meetings. For instance, responding to the prompt “writing is like…” she wrote: “Writing is like dreaming, you’re not sure exactly what’s going on but you know it’s happening in your head, and as you go you forget things and then the story doesn’t make sense, but that’s okay because it’s your story or your dream and you’re allowed to make whatever you [want] happen.” There is a sense of whimsy in this response, the suggestion that writing is about complete freedom and ownership over one’s ideas and the ways that they take shape on the page. Here, the process of writing is also nonlinear, for the writer does not always know where the story he or she is writing is going, and this is perfectly okay.

Corrinne was insistent that though this is how she thought of writing, her experiences in first-year composition directly confronted and challenged this version of writing without formulas that she had come to know and love through her earlier experiences in school, at home, and in extracurricular writing contexts. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, I revisit Corrinne’s critique of her FYC courses in the following Inter chapter.
Corrinne listed different kinds of writers when I inquired about how she defined “writer”; however, like Stewie, an essential component of the identity “writer” for her was that it referred to someone who genuinely liked to write: “You have technical writers that are boring. And then you have fictional writers, and you have journalists and stuff. So I guess it [writer] just sort of means that you like to put words together in whatever form that you like to use them.” Like Stewie, Corrinne’s dialog about writers seemed to suggest, at first, that writer is a professional identity. A writer might be a technical writer (working on manuals for a living), a writer might also be an author of novels or plays or poems, or a writer might be a journalist (working for newspapers, magazines, or blogs). However, when she responded in writing on the Writer’s Questionnaire, her description expanded beyond the professional; for instance, she wrote that a writer could be “Someone that writes well, or professionally, or that writes a lot as a hobby.”

Yet Corrinne was hesitant to call anyone who did any kind of writing for any kind of reason a writer. She disqualified certain kinds of people who write as “real writers.” For example, a writer is not someone who is just “going through the motions” without really “thinking” about his or her writing, and a writer is not someone whose exigency for writing is school or a particular assignment for a class and whose goal is getting a “good grade and having everything they need to have there [in the paper or writing assignment].” In one of her Writer’s Questionnaire responses, she clarified further, suggesting that it is not just writing for school or writing within the lines that disqualified a person from being a real writer, but whether or not the person doing the writing had fun and enjoyed themself: “I don’t think that kids that have written 600 school essays are really writers unless they’ve gotten some sort of joy from it. I think writers are people that like to write.”
Over and over again, both in the questionnaire and in dialogue, Corrinne stressed that someone who was a writer needed to actually like writing, to derive joy from writing—something she suggested is unlikely if the writing a person is doing is limited to school contexts. She also indicated that to be a writer someone needed to write a lot and also identify or call him or herself a writer: “I feel like [all] people are a writer to some extent. You can say like, ‘oh, I know how to write,’ so technically you’d be like a writer, but I feel like you’re only really a writer if you enjoy it maybe—[then] you would actually say, ‘I’m a writer.’”

I introduce Corrinne in the first chapter of this dissertation with a short statement about writers where she indicates that anyone can be a writer if they believe: “Writers are the people that put the words into cauldrons and make potions out of them. Anyone can do it, you just—like magic—have to believe.” The data I collected seems to suggest that for Corrinne, what people need to believe is that writing is fun, is joyful even, and people also need to believe in themselves as writers. The quote from Corrinne that opens this chapter suggests that believing in or seeing oneself as a writer can be daunting. She navigates this difficult task, as I discuss later in this chapter, by imagining herself as a writer, not by thinking about her present self, but by imagining possibilities for herself, thinking, playfully, about her future self.

*Dialogue about Writer Identity*

In terms of writer identity, Corrinne felt that this was something that was expressed by or inherently created within the writing that someone actually did, “whatever it is that they write, then that’s their writerly identity.” I clarified, asking, “so, what they’re producing reflects back who they are as a writer?” and she confirmed, “Yea.” Yet, at the same time, she was careful to be sure to again clarify that if the writing we were looking at was solely comprised of school assignments, the identity reflected would not be that of a “real writer”: “I feel like writers are
people that like to write. Anybody that’s writing something can be a writer, but if somebody is working on a paper for class [I wouldn’t call them a writer], but if somebody writes all the time, I’d be like ‘Oh, you’re a writer!’” When I asked her about how school impacted her writer identity, like Stewie, she suggested that what she produced in and for school was completely different from what she produced on her own time because the writing that she produced for school did not often reflect herself: “I think a lot of times I just put school and my writing separate, completely different things, like…it’s something I had to do for school so it’s not as much, like me.” When referencing her writing, Corrinne is talking about the creative writing she did outside of school. Something like a text message, to her, was more like speech than writing.

When I asked Corrinne whether she thought it was a problem or an issue that so many people who wrote and communicated in writing as part of their daily lives did not think of themselves as writers, she intimated that she had no desire for everyone to start thinking of themselves as writers: “I don’t really think it’s a problem because I don’t want all these kids to suddenly decide that they’re writers and put out a bunch of crappy pulp fiction on the market.” When I asked why she thought it was important to restrict the identity writer, for instance, deciding not to count people who really only wrote for school, she responded: “Because we like to feel special and be like well, I’m a writer.” As an additional example of her felt exigency to keep writer a relatively exclusive identity, she emphasized that when she talked about her experiences participating in NaNoWriMo and publishing her work, as she often did, she was careful to frame her participation as something extra-ordinary: “I make it sound really cool so they [other people] don’t realize that it’s super easy.”

Corrinne and I differ on a few points here. First, I do not think it is “super easy” to draft a 50,000 word novel in a month, particularly one like hers that keeps the reader on the edge of her
seat with complex and unexpected plot twists. Second, I also disagree with Corrinne that if everyone were suddenly to think of themselves as writers, the identities of all writers everywhere would be devalued. In fact, what struck me most concerning Corrinne’s dialogue about writer identity was that she drew a direct corollary between people taking on self-identities as writers (calling themselves writers) and people participating or publishing—she was not concerned that everyone did not think of themselves as writers because then the literary market would be flooded with “crappy pulp fiction.” The link between self-identity and agency is, in fact, exactly why I feel so strongly, as a teacher of writing, that a fundamental goal of the writing classroom needs to be opening the identity of writer to a variety of people—to both students who feel that they are and/or who have been told by teachers or peers that they are good or poor writers.

This dissertation is largely a project that explores the effects of the cultural exclusivity endowed to the identity writer. Corrinne’s above conversation nods to this exclusivity, even jokingly admitting that people who are writers—like herself—want to keep the identity to themselves so that they can feel special. This exclusivity appeared elsewhere in our conversations about writer identity as well. Throughout our meetings Corrinne was forthcoming with the fact that she felt the quirkier or more eccentric that she was presented in this dissertation chapter—in particular referring to her imagined writer identity Enni C. Leowly and her enthusiasm for writing—the more validity she would gain with readers as a legitimate or authentic writer. I also agreed with her, for the eccentricities of her talk, identified as a writer—what other kind of person would talk excitedly about fighting with their characters?

Speaking about a fansite for Michelle Paver’s young adult series, *The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness*, Corrinne remarked that part of what she liked about joining an online community of readers and writers was that though she was careful not to reveal too much of her
identity, she could be forthcoming about the “weirdo” inside her: “we couldn’t tell each other about ourselves—well we could but we couldn’t—and you’re more like yourself, like that weirdo inside you.” At another point, she recounted a conversation between her and her sister where her sister was talking to Corrinne about someone she knew who was participating, as Corrinne was, in NaNoWriMo. When her sister told her that the particular boy she was speaking about was a little odd, Corrinne remembers responding, “well, of course he is, he’s a writer!”

For Corrinne, everyone cannot be a writer, in part because people who do not truly enjoy writing would never call themselves “writer”—and one cannot be a writer if one does not see him or herself as a writer—and in part because writer is an identity applied to people who are “weirdoes” and rule-breakers. In order to take on a self-identity as a writer, from Corrinne’s perspective, one needs to not be afraid to be different, to not exactly fit in, to be perceived as a little odd or strange by the people around them, to, in fact, relish in one’s difference from other people and wear such difference like a badge of the in-club, the authentic writers club. While there is a certain power wrapped up in Corrinne’s description of writers—they are people empowered to be themselves rather than people who succumb to the social pressure to “fit in” or be “normal,” conforming to rather than challenging social norms—the sense of empowerment that Corrinne finds in this fringe identity is, in many ways, what discourages others from calling themselves writers.

*Exclusivity and Secrecy*

This notion of the writer as the unpopular, as a person who occupies a position on the social fringe, is a cultural notion that in many ways functions to keep the identity writer exclusive. As Deborah Brandt noted in her study of literacy in American lives, “[s]ecrecy” has traditionally gone hand in hand with the kinds of writing that people do outside of classrooms.”
(Literacy and Learning 106). Katherine Schultz, too, found in her longitudinal study of children’s literacies that people are generally more hesitant to share their writing with others and take on the identity of writer than not. For instance, Schultz noted that many of the students she encountered in her study were embarrassed to admit to their peers that they wrote outside of school:

Despite students' reluctance and professed dislike for writing during the school day, in my interviews and field observations I discovered that more than half of the students I interviewed wrote outside school . . . Primarily students wrote poems, letters, and journals. Some wrote plays and a variety of fiction and non-fiction prose. For the most part they did not share their writing with peers. Many were embarrassed to admit that they wrote on their own and only offered to show me their writing once we had established a close relationship. (357-8)

If, as Corrinne suggests (and Stewie as well), the writing that people do in classrooms and for classrooms is often too structured and controlled for students to actually feel that the writing they are doing represents who they are as people, that the majority of people hide their out-of-school writing is all the more problematic, for it is the kind of writing that challenges an autonomous model of literacy (Street) that is inseparable from an autonomous model of identity.

While Corrinne suggested that if everyone thought of him or herself as a writer and publically claimed the identity “writer” there would be a mass surge in publishing, Schultz’s research highlights that a public proclamation of one’s writerly self might not change the landscape of publishing, but it could change the landscape of the classroom. With one particular student, Denise, Schultz successfully worked to “bridge” her secret outside-of-school writing (play-writing) with in-school expectations:
With my encouragement Denise showed the script to her drama teacher who produced it as a play with the only drama class in the school. Denise kept her distance from the rehearsals in their initial stages and reluctantly stepped forward to receive flowers at the evening performance of the play.

Following this event Denise seemed to link her work as a writer of poetry and plays at home to her identity as a writer at school. After her teachers pointed out that she could use this play for her senior project, she reluctantly began work on this step toward graduation. Although initially she had planned to boycott the whole experience, she agreed to participate under these new terms. When it came time to present her project, once again she flatly refused to participate in the public performance. She calculated that she could graduate without participating in the performative portion of the project. . . Denise was allowed to make an audio-tape at home that she delivered to her English teacher. (380-1)

What is important about Schultz’s account excerpted here is that it provides a view of the potential to invoke change, to disrupt autonomous education practices, when students’ own writer identities are taken into account. Her account also highlights the benefit of such practice for students. Once Denise was able to merge her previously hidden self-identity as a writer with her in-school English class, she went from a student who was unlikely to graduate from high school to a high school graduate.

Kevin Roozen articulates the benefits of making transfer or what he calls “historical trajectories of practice” a central concern of the writing classroom in his work as well:

By inviting our students to draw from the range of literate practices and activities they engage in outside of school and to honor the values, beliefs, and interests
embedded in them, we encourage them to contribute to, rather than merely reproduce, academic literacy—to make it their own rather than someone else’s. And, ultimately, we empower students to write their own way into the university.

(25)

This metaphor, of course, extends beyond universities; Denise, for instance, literally wrote her way, via a play and asynchronous recordings, to high school graduation.

Though Corrinne is an active and interested writer, someone who goes to great lengths to invent herself as a writer, some of her college writing teachers did not know that she thought of herself as a writer, a creative writer. Even as all of her friends (online and off) knew that she was a writer—the quirky kind—Corrinne’s college writing classes and her teachers seemed closed to this identity. There was no room for Corrinne’s self as creative writer in her FYC classrooms. Margaret Voss captures the irony of such rigidity within educational environments: “Our society asks that schools teach children to be literate, but values only certain literacies and remains uncertain of how to develop others, leading to the irony that our diverse society does not know how to value and celebrate diversity” (188). To ignore that students have active identities as writers outside of particular classroom contexts is a missed opportunity, as Roozen and Schultz suggest, to engage students in making the curriculum relevant to their own lives and goals.

**Autobiographical Literacy Narrative: Sponsors and Communities of Practice**

I explicitly asked Corrinne who she felt sponsored (Brandt) her development as a writer: “I guess a lot of it is my family and then, sometimes friends, and then sometimes the people that are in the groups that I’m in…I guess teachers, unless I don’t like them.” Throughout our identity chats, Corrinne emphasized four different sponsors or communities of practice (NCTE) that were
essential to her development as a writer: (1) growing up in a family who worked a variety of literate activities into their daily lives, who found ways to make a variety of literacies fun to engage with, and growing up under the supervision of parents who taught their children that being a little different than other people was perfectly normal; (2) opportunities to work collaboratively and creatively with other students in her school to create and publish newsletters and magazines; (3) online communities where she could interact with other adolescents, through writing, to engage more meaningfully and personally with the young adult literature she was reading; and (4) NaNoWriMo, which introduced her to a large community of writers—professional writers and hobbyists—who were free-giving with mentorship, encouragement, and advice concerning writing processes and tools.

In order to understand how Corrinne developed a self-identity as a writer, it is necessary to understand her literate activities and the communities that support them, both while she was growing up and at the time of our meetings. I review her history, mapping dialogue, anecdotes, and artifacts that help to illustrate how she came to take on a self-identity as a writer. Corrinne has engaged with and actively sought out a variety of activities or communities in order to both project herself as a writer and experience the impression that her writerly self makes upon others.

*Literacy Learning at Home: Collaborative Writing, Storytelling, and Gas Mileage Calculating*

Though they were not officially part of my study, Corrinne’s family were often involved in our research together; for instance, her brother accompanied her to our first meeting together (where she was unsure of whether or not she was going to be murdered). Similarly, her older sister Carrie’s class project is a key piece of data that I draw on throughout this chapter and encourage readers to watch as an embedded text within this chapter. Corrinne and I made the decision to revise my project with BGSU’s Human Subjects Review Board, making her
participation in the study non-confidential, in order to be able to include images, dialogue, and a link to this video. (Click on fig. 5.1 to be directed to the YouTube documentary that Carrie created about Corrinne’s NaNoWriMo process).

The documentary opens with Corinne doing a handstand, the word “ideas” written in neon green traveling from her toes to her head, the camera scanning this progression. From our dialogue, I learned that Corrinne’s sister asked Corinne to do a handstand to suggest that “all the ideas are flowing down to your brain.” She, Carrie, wanted a dramatic beginning. In this video, Corrinne is performing or revealing her present tense autobiographical self as a writer. The documentary was shared publically with Carrie’s class, online via YouTube.com, and the sisters also sent it to Chris Baty, the founder of NaNoWriMo.

Fig. 5.1. Screen Captures of Carrie's Documentary, Handstand, from melda92TRS's, “Corrinne and Her Nano,” YouTube; 9 Dec. 2011; Web; 19 May 2013.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT_8mlFvD3c>
Carrie also joined a few meetings with Corrinne (as did some of Corrinne’s friends). There are artifacts in Corrinne’s archive that were writing spaces she shared with her two siblings and also with her father. Similarly, her mother dug around in her own archive of her children’s artifacts to add to Corrinne’s archive—she had saved years of Mother’s Day cards that Corrinne had crafted for her that often included short stories.

The members of Corrinne’s family have played and continue to play central roles in her literate activities and identity development. For instance, she noted that while she does not directly involve her family in her writing, they often function as audience members, especially her sister (as the documentary illustrates):

I usually do not involve my family in [my writing] that much—they all like to get themselves involved. I don’t really talk about it until they just bug me enough and then I’m like, ‘well, here, this is it.’ So not so much me involving them, them involving themselves. I guess they encourage me though. Also, my sister because she’s nosey and she wants to be a part of it. And, she’s thinks I’m hilarious, so she always wants to be involved in what I’m doing because she thinks it’s more fun than what she’s doing […] She likes to get involved and the rest of my family just sort of stays out of it. During NaNoWriMo my mom is always like, well, “you didn’t have to put the dishes away because you’re writing your book so you owe them,” she’s like, “you have all of November off from all of your chores because you are working on that book.” I really don’t though, I still do stuff! I guess they’re there, but they aren’t in the process as much.

Corrinne has fond memories of being read to from her youth. Reading aloud was a family activity, usually led by her mother, involving all of the children in the Burns family:
We read alllll the time. My mom always read to us, ever since I can remember. We had all the *Raggedy Anne and Andy* books, and so she read us all of those—mostly me and Carrie, Christian was too little, he doesn’t remember that. She read us all the *Chronicles of Narnia* books. I remember—my uncle has a hot air balloon—so we would go to hot air balloon rallies and while they’re in their pilots briefing thing we would sit out in the truck and she would read to us then, so when we were like waiting for things. [She usually read to us] during the day when we stopped taking naps or sometimes at night. Once we got a little bit older she read us *The Hobbit*—my sister is a huge *Lord of the Rings* fan and that’s what kind of like started that.

She expressed a sense of gratitude toward her parents, particularly her mother, for encouraging her to love reading early in her life:

We read and stuff, I know that’s an advantage for me because a lot of people are like “oh my gosh I don’t like reading” and you can tell, people are smarter when they read books. I think a lot of it—it’s just like, [the book is] not necessarily going to be set in your lifetime, it’s not necessarily like the same time period or the same setting, so you’re going to learn about different places and even like, I’m really good at context clues, so I can understand a word when people use it in a sentence, I think that’s from reading.

Similarly, just as she credits her mother for her love of reading, she also credits her father for awakening the storyteller within her:

I’ve been telling stories my whole life. When I was little I would always make up stories. My dad always makes up stories so I guess I started learning storytelling
from him. We go to my grandma and grandpa’s every Sunday, so if we got
stopped by a train on the way back—and we got stopped by trains on the way
back all the time—he would shut the car off, so all the lights would be off, and it
would be just be train rumbling past us and he would tell us all these really scary
stories.

When she was young, she can remember working with her father on stories—she writing and he
illustrating (for example, fig. 5.2).

![Fig. 5.2. Page from Corrinne and Her father’s Collaborative Story.](image)

This collaborative practice has followed her throughout her life. For instance, her first attempt at
writing a novel—though she only got three pages in—was a collaborative attempt as well:

> When I was in 4th grade, I was like “I’m going to write a story,” and my friend
> was going to draw pictures for me because she’s a really good artist. It was about
two girls—it was called “Lose One Find One.” It was about these two girls and
the one was going to have to move away so she was going to lose her best friend
and then she was going to meet this other kid and he was going to be her new best
friend.
Corrinne, several times, remarked that she was thankful for growing up in her family, especially as she got older and realized that her parents supported their children’s literacy development in much different ways than other families did. Margaret Voss, in her exploration of literacy practices across home and school spaces, argued: “At home, literacies—whether print, interactive, or involving other media—are woven into the daily fabric of life. They are embedded in activities and relationships and as such are not always apparent” (181). Similarly, Corrinne’s appreciation for at home learning came from her realization of how much her parents “embedded” literacy learning “into the fabric of daily life,” making things like reading, doing math, and writing fun. For instance, she remembers always having educational stops planned into her family vacations and sharing a journal with her sister and brother where they would record details about their vacation (see fig. 5.3).

She vividly recalled the first time she realized how much her parents invested in their children’s literate developments and how crafty they were at sneaking in literacy lessons: In the
backseat of one of her friend’s parent’s cars, they pulled into a gas station, and Corrinne inquired about who was going to get out the notebook and figure out the gas mileage and was shocked to find out that, unlike her family, other families did not play a game where the children worked together to calculate gas mileage:

My dad makes us write down the, figure out the gas mileage of our car, so we have to remember how many gallons of gas we got, what the speedometer, or whatever, how far you went, and you have to do all this math, and divide the gallons by how far you went and then figure out how many miles per gallon, and I thought that was something that everybody did until I was 11. I went somewhere with my friends, and I was like, “oh, who’s going to write down the numbers?” and they were like “what are you talking about?” and I was like “oh, you guys don’t do that?” But my uncle, the one with the hot air balloon, they do it too, so I didn’t think it was that weird, but apparently it was. My parents have all sorts of weird quirky things that I just thought were normal growing up and I found out that not everybody does them.

For Corrinne, this was a defining moment. She brought up the gas mileage story during two of our meetings together. The first time, in an early meeting when she was describing how her family did things differently than other families and the second time much later in our meetings when she was explaining a series of creative identity sketches that she sent me (see fig. 5.14). She used this story to explain how she had grown up learning that it was okay to be herself and that it mattered what she thought about herself, not what others thought of her.

For Corrinne, that fact that her family was “quirky” has helped to support her identity development. For instance, knowing that her entire family did things a bit differently than other
families and that her parents, particularly her father, were indifferent to what other people thought helped her to adopt a self-reliant perspective on identity development:

I had this whole phase in 8th grade, and I was like, OKAY, I’m sick of people being bullies to other people, and I was like, “Who do I want to be?” So, I made this list of who I wanted to be and then I just became that. And I was like, I don’t really care. This is what I want to do. This is who I want to be. It doesn’t really matter who I am right now because I can change it because it’s about me, so I can change whatever I want.

I thought this was a rather bold move for an eighth grader. During middle school, perhaps the most awkward moment of adolescence, Corrinne was not focused on how to fit in but rather how to differentiate herself from other people. I asked her where she thought self-reflections like this came from and where she felt she gained the self-confidence, and really the empowerment, to not care what anyone thought of her. She largely credited her father:

This one time, I was in 8th grade, and this girl told me she’d never met a Corrinne she liked, and I was like okay, well, that’s lovely. And then I was like, well I don’t really care…and then I was like, oh, I really don’t care, and then I was like, oh that’s really cool and so then I was like, so if I don’t really care and the only person that I have to care about is how I think of myself, well, if I want to think this way about myself, then I’m going to do that. I guess my dad is like that too.

He’s always like, oh yea, we’ll just do whatever we want. My dad is really quirky.

Perhaps one of the most valuable literacies that a parent can gift a child with is empowering her with a sense of control over who she wants to be in the world and a sense of indifference toward the pressure to “fit in” and be like everyone else.
As other literacy researchers have speculated (Brandt, Schultz), many students keep their writing hidden, writing in journals or notebooks that they never share with anyone because they are embarrassed about how their peers might think of them. While Corrinne did not share her writing or the fact that she was a writer with her all of her college teachers, she did share her writing with friends, both online and off, and quite regularly. In many ways, growing up learning not just to love reading and writing, but to love herself, whoever she wanted to be, has been as essential in supporting and nurturing Corrinne as a writer as anything else. This practice of putting into writing who she wanted to become is one that centrally supports her self-identity as a writer; for instance, as I detail in the next section, when I asked Corrinne to create something to contribute to the chapter that would help readers understand her self-identity as a writer, she created a list not of who she was, but of who she would become, explaining that this was a vision of her future self, one that she drew on in the present tense, in order to think of, see, and call herself a writer.

Growing up with literate activities embedded within her family life, Corrinne learned early on to think of activities like reading and writing as fun. She learned, before she could even read that the purpose of reading was to entertain and that it was a social activity—it was something that was fun, something that someone did when they might otherwise be bored while waiting for a hot air balloon race to start, for instance. Similarly, she learned before she could write that the purpose of telling stories was to entertain people, that storytelling was a performative practice, that setting was everything, and that the success of any story was dependent upon an audience’s reaction. Later, when she began writing, she learned that this too was something that was fun, an activity that was also meant to entertain, both the writer and reader, and that it was something that one could do with other people. Reading and writing, for
Corrinne, have always been about fun, not work, and they have also always been about community.

*Literacy Learning in School*

As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, in talking about literacy learning in school, Corrinne often directed our conversations to what she was learning, and resisting, in her first-year writing courses. However, in narrating the artifacts in her archive, she also recalled some of her early experiences learning to read and write in elementary school, and while she felt that there was a distinct line separating the kinds of writing she was asked to do in school from the kinds of writing she did outside of school—mainly “ruled writing” from fiction writing—she felt that all of her writing, even the highly formulaic kind, was a part of her identity as a writer. For instance, she remarked at one point that though she was not necessarily fully expressing her writerly self in some of her papers for school, when such papers were placed in the context of her full archive and when they were read alongside her teacher’s assignment sheets, she felt such in-school texts showed exactly what it was that she did not like to write—a critical component of her identity as a writer.

Her earliest memory of reading in school is from kindergarten. Importantly, this early memory also clearly demonstrates that from her earliest encounter with school—an institution of learning—she experienced an environment that was hostile, that challenged how she valued and thought about herself as a literate being:

I don’t actually know when I started reading…I know my sister started really early…I’m pretty sure I could read before Kindergarten started—I don’t remember learning to read in kindergarten. I remember being really mad in Kindergarten one time because there were two different books. There was the
trumpet book or something and then there was the drum book, and once you got to the trumpet book and were a good reader then you got to move on to the drum book, and I thought I was the best reader in the whole class and a bunch of people got to move on to the drum book and I was really mad because I didn’t.

She also recalled that writing in journals was something that her elementary teachers usually asked her to do, specifically recalling kindergarten and the third grade. She remembers how in kindergarten, the writing she was doing was mostly orally dictated to her teacher and usually was being used in order to describe a picture:

I remember we always put “this is so and so” and then we would draw a picture. Our teacher, she would, we just had to tell her what to say and a lot of times she would just write it for us. One day, she was like “ok, I’m not going to write any more journal entries that start with this is.” So we all had a panic attack because we didn’t know how else to write a journal entry…we just wanted to say what our picture was and we didn’t actually make it a story or a journal entry.

Interestingly, a central part of her writing process now, when working on stories, is to illustrate images of her characters and design novel covers. For Corrinne, the “this is so and so” that describes a picture of someone—what she might now call character development—is a crucial beginning point for her fiction writing process: “usually I start with an idea—I want to make up a story about this—and then sort of from there I make characters and then from there I write…from the beginning to the end. In between I will draw covers and draw characters. Usually I know who all my characters are going to be before I start.” In fact, the connection between drawing and Corrinne’s writing process is so important that when her sister Carrie directed and edited her documentary of Corrinne’s NaNoWriMo journey, she explicitly asked
that Corrinne act out a scene where she was drawing in order that her process be accurately
documented (see fig. 5.4). (Corrinne explained that she will hand draw out characters and scan
them to her computer or draw them directly on her computer. The documentary only includes her
hand drawing because of the difficulty of filming a computer screen).

![Image](image.png)

Fig. 5.4. Screen Capture from Carrie's Documentary, Drawing.

Throughout her anecdotal tour of her archive, Corrinne stopped to identify particular practices
and assignments that she felt nurtured and respected who she was and wanted to become as a
writer. For instance, she was particularly complimentary of a teacher who, rather than having
students simply respond to a story or summarize what happened, asked students to draft and send
letters to the author: “In 2nd grade we read all of the Junie B. Jones books. I wrote a letter to her
[the author] and I got a letter back. I got a letter back from Junie B. Jones too. I have that
somewhere.” Sam Intrator and Robert Kunzman argue that “responding to what students don’t
care about will not suffice; teachers need to listen more carefully to youth about what does
matter to them in the classroom context and understand the broader contextual forces that shape
their attitude and disposition toward school” (38-9). In Corrinne’s narrative, she pointed to this
particular example of corresponding directly with the author as a positive and meaningful writing
experience. However, this second grade experience was not limited to one isolated anecdote; for
instance, in her critique of GSW that follows in the Inter chapter, one of her primary
recommendations was that when teachers asked students to select “real world” audiences, that they should also require their students to mail their essays or products to those real world audiences. For her, imagining an audience was a process that needed to lead to contact with the audience.

In general, Corrinne also noted that what mattered to her was that her teachers knew her, knew the quirky side of her. When she felt that her teachers knew her as a person, not just as a student, she found learning and writing in their classes to be particularly fulfilling. For instance, after she commented that she views her writing in school and her writing outside of school differently because her in-school writing is not as much her, she made one exception. If she knew the teacher and the teacher knew her, this changed everything, and she would both enjoy writing and feel free to express herself in her writing. As an example of the kind of teaching that made Corrinne care about school, what her teacher thought of her and her writing, and that made her comfortable to write as herself, she referenced a particular assignment for The Great Gatsby concerning whether or not Nick Carraway was a reliable narrator. For her, it was not so much the assignment that appealed to her, but the fact that her teacher was not looking for a correct answer, which allowed her to have a bit of fun with the teacher’s assignment: “So, even if I thought he was a reliable narrator, I could be like, ‘nope!’ and just write this whole thing about [laughing]...just so long as she could tell that I knew what I was talking about and I could back it up with facts, even if I didn’t really believe it myself, I like those sorts of assignments better.” This sort of assignment that she is referring to is a writing assignment that is not framed as a “yes” or “no” answer, rather, it is an assignment that frames writing as rhetorical agency and that judges “correctness” based on rationale and persuasion, the strength of an argument.
In their review of scholarship inclusive of adolescent voices and critiques concerning school and literacy learning, Intrator and Kunzman found that “academic motivation and achievement” were linked to students feeling as though they had a relationship with their teachers (39). Like many other adolescents, for Corrinne, trying in school, caring about what she was writing, had a lot to do with whether or not her teacher “appreciated” her, her sense of humor, her quirkiness, her desire to be different: “I’ll try it their way and then if they still don’t like it, I’m like well, ‘I don’t like you so…!’ It’s sort of like, I’ll give them a chance to appreciate me and then if they don’t it’s their fault, their loss (when I’m rich and famous, I’ll be like well, you should fire that teacher from your school).

Corrinne’s perspective suggests that she perceives her relationship with teachers based upon how they approach and read the texts that she produces. When she can find room to play within school determined writing assignments and when her teachers engage this playfulness in their readings of her texts, she can be herself. The implications of her feedback about what works and does not work in writing classrooms suggests that teacher commentary is extremely important; it signals to students whether or not they are able to bring themselves, their personalities, into the classroom or not. Similarly, it also signals to students the kind of relationship they are to have with their teachers. Engaged learning, as Corrinne suggested in our dialogue and as Intrator and Kunzman found as well, happens only when students feel a connection with their teachers that goes beyond the curriculum—in writing classes, I imagine such a connection could be created when teachers made room on rubrics for students’ own writing goals, not just standardized necessities.
As she began to navigate through her archive, two different series of in-school, collaborative publications emerged as important experiences for Corrinne, so important that she chose to purposefully distinguish them from the other kinds of writing that she did in-school. Corrinne used eight different categories to organize the artifacts that she compiled in her archive (see fig. 5.5):

1. Outside of school journals (including her own journals as well as the vacation journal that she kept with her sister and brother).

2. Fiction and completed writing (including two bound copies of novels she completed for NaNoWriMo, collaborative stories she created with other people, and small picture-book-stories her grandparents had created about and for her in elementary school—in figure 5.5, this pile is deceptively slim; it significantly expands when her online work is included).

3. School publications (including the two series of collaborative publications, one from her sixth grade history class and another from freshman English in high school).

4. Image-related writing (including many of the mother’s day cards she had created as well as different “advertisements” she created with her sister for fun).

5. 4-H projects (including a family history project and two “idea file” projects that overlapped with her fiction and completed writing pile because during and post her 4-H creation of these files they were related to her NaNoWriMo work).
6. Writing for other clubs (including an essay she wrote to gain entrance to the Honor’s College at BGSU, work for the high school debate club, and writing that she completed for her youth leadership church summer camp).

7. School-related writing (including her GSW portfolios, essays for her high school and college classes, and other varied projects she had completed for school, for instance, a science fair project).

8. In-school notes (including stacks of binders and notebooks filled with notes—though many only partially filled, containing more doodles than notes at times—and worksheets).

Fig. 5.5. Corrinne's Categorized Archive.

It is significant that Corrinne categorized her sixth grade and high school freshman English publications separately from everything else that she was asked to write in school. These projects were different from the essays that she was asked to write, the projects she was asked to complete, the notes that she took, and the worksheets that she completed. These texts, unlike her...
other school texts, were collaborative, full of colorful images, had an audience broader than simply the teacher, were peer-directed (in some cases entirely), and she was also proud of them.

While she narrated the contexts of all of the artifacts in her archive, there was a stark contrast between her reviews of these artifacts and her reviews of other school-related artifacts. Her comments about the majority of her papers and projects were brief: what she was asked to do, what she did, and the grade she received. For these “do not fit with other school related writing” documents, however, she spent time going through them, page by page, recalling what roles different students took on, how they collaborated and why, the process of publishing them to get them to a larger audience than their own class, etc.

I spend time reviewing them here because they are examples of what kinds of writing projects resonated with Corrinne and other students in her classes. These particular projects very clearly demonstrate the kinds of writing that engage students, the kinds of writing projects that ask students to take on writerly roles, enabling students to take on individualized identities as writers while working within a community that has established rules and norms, the kinds of writing projects that allow students to project themselves as writers and experience the impression that their writer identities make on audiences broader than a teacher who is reading through the lens of a rules-based rubric or state test mandated standards. These kinds of projects demonstrate how writing can be used as a tool for learning without resorting to the kinds of fill-in-the-blank exercises that alienate students like Stewie Daniels, for instance.

The series of publications that Corrinne worked on with other students in sixth grade are a compelling example because these particular publications were entirely student directed. As Corrinne explains, because she was at a private school at this point in time, classes were incredibly small, so small that in her history class, fifth and sixth grade students were combined.
She explained that the fifth grade students needed more time than the sixth grade students in order to learn the material that the teacher was covering, leaving her and her accelerated peers with a lot of down time:

The school I went to was so small so we had the two classes together…so during history, the teacher had to spend so much more time with them [fifth graders]. One of the things in the book, it was a little activity, and it was like ‘write a magazine article about living in Skara Brae or whatever, so we were like “Okay!” So, then we were like “Let’s do it,”’ and then they were like, “well, let’s just make a whole magazine.” So, that’s what we…we decided to make a whole magazine while the 5th graders were still trying to learn where Skara Brae was. So we did that, and from there we just did one for each chapter, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Asia.

As she paged carefully through each issue, she noted that it was the students’ idea not just to turn a non-assigned mini-lesson from the book into a full scale, multi-issued, magazine, but also to informally publish it as well, explaining that the first issue her teacher, at the students’ request, had copied at Staples but that for “the rest of them we scanned them in at my house and printed them out” because the cost was too high at Staples. The sixth graders were so involved with this task that they began using all of their free-time in school to work on the magazine:

We would even work on them when she was teaching them other stuff [classes didn’t do everything together—separate math and spelling], but she always took way more time with them then she did with us, so we just worked on this thing during that time. We all made up fake names too, really funny ones though. We drew all the pictures and we made advertisements too.
In his reflections on his own process of creating, revising, and publishing a children’s story and the processes of student collaborations he observed in his son’s elementary language arts classroom, Robert Yagelski argues that “when children collaborate in writing and reading, they do so in remarkably sophisticated ways—ways that can enhance their development as writers and readers” (228). Similarly, William Wright argues that student publication in the writing classroom invokes interdisciplinarity and, reflecting on writing for publication in his own writing classrooms points out that, “The students’ struggles in writing for publication are similar to those they bump into in writing any essays: purpose, focus, organization, development, and audience” (267-8). Wright argues that teachers who craft collaborative writing projects that culminate in publication do so in order to encourage “student writers’ authority” and, citing the work of Rosemary Parmigiani and Nancie Atwell, noted the “excitement these publications engender” (263). As Corrinne explicitly noted that one of the fundamental components of a writer is that they enjoy writing, I think it is essential to highlight her experiences working with these in-school publications that her and her classmates enjoyed so much that they spent all of their free time working together toward publication.

The sixth grade students in Corrinne’s class modeled their publication on newspapers, including in their Mesopotamia edition a mix of advertisements and informative columns where they merge what they were learning in their history class with subjects relevant to their own lives. Their table of contents very clearly demonstrates how they modeled their publication after popular newspapers, in particular *Today Magazine*: (1) Ziggurats Today, (2) Thanksgiving Today, (3) World Records Today, (4) Fashion Today, (5) Rivers Today, (6) Dear Abbie L. Today, (7) Interview with Sargon Today, (8) Interview with King David Today, (9) Technology Today, (10) Agriculture Today.
I have included a few examples from this issue here (figures 5.6-8) to demonstrate not only the engagement that this activity elicited from members in Corrine’s class but also the sophisticated skills they were exercising, skills that certainly support writing developing, such as the synthesis of information. On their own time and for fun, students in Corrine’s class were using writing to process what they were learning in their history class and to connect knowledge about ancient civilizations with their own lives; however, they were also very clearly engaged in
genre analysis, research, summary, in many cases parody, and perhaps above all else, they had an exemplary understanding of audience—I have not encountered a textbook that makes information about ancient civilizations as appealing to adolescents as these sixth graders have here. For instance, Mo Ron, in an article about Ziggurats, writes: “Pyramids are pretty much the same thing as ziggurats…The only difference is what goes on inside: Ziggurats; nightlife, Pyramids; afterlife” (figure 5.6).

Fig. 5.7. "Fashion Today."
As Corrinne details, students who participated were also involved in navigating roles and determining duties: “We had one girl who was really good at drawing so she never wrote articles because we always needed her to draw the pictures for us.” Similarly, students were also involved in editorial processes:

We decided that it was more fun to make the advertisements than to write the articles, so there gradually gets to be more and more advertisements, we would just be sitting around, wouldn’t have anything to do, and we’d just be like ‘oh let’s make up an ad for the magazine’ and then we had more ads than we did articles so we had to figure out where to put them strategically throughout here so it wasn’t overloaded.
This publication is fascinating for a variety of reasons, but perhaps most importantly because this was a student-directed activity—the teacher was only involved in the publication process, and even then, only for the first issue. This was students’ remix of a classroom activity suggested by their textbook, and as Corrinne explained, it became something that consumed students’ free time inside of and outside of school. These students’ work also left the classroom in other ways as well, for instance, Corrinne explained that they tried to get the rest of the students in the school involved as well: “we tried to get the rest of the school involved with it so we had this competition about, in the Egypt one, we had this hieroglyphics secret code thing to see if people could figure it out and we said ‘oh, whoever can figure it out, you can have an advertisement in the ad.’” The reward for winning their competition was getting to write for the publication.

As a college writing teacher, I have not encountered as many students as I would like who perceive writing as a way to process information, let alone as a way to have fun, to entertain, and to interact with their classmates. There is something important to be learned from Corrinne’s sixth grade publications, for they are examples of what happens when students determine what an ideal writing assignment might look like. Similarly, Yagelski’s argument about productive opportunities for writing classrooms to be interdisciplinary through student publications is particularly relevant here as is Wright’s argument that student publication actively engages students in essential writing processes and practices.

This sixth grade experience was not the only student publication Corrinne worked on in school. She also shared artifacts from her work on a series of newsletters from her high school English class. Coming upon them as she sorted through her archive, she explained how students worked in groups to take on roles as editors or content producers, sometimes working better collaboratively than others:
Certain people volunteered to be the editors, so we did the covers and had to look at everybody else’s stuff—I think there was like four of us, so we would switch every time. One time you would do the covers and proofread stuff, and the other time[s] you would write one of the little inside things. We worked in groups of three and each group did a page, we decided what all we were going to put in our thing. My group did this “Just for Kix” page, so there were three of us, so somebody found the coloring page that they [readers] could do, and then the other ones, we just [found these] puzzles and stuff. We usually would work on it sometime during school if we could, and if not, then usually one person [would] do it mostly. For the other one, where we did the down-low, we each wrote a review about some band or something and then we each would do one and send them off to one person who would put the actual page together.

However, these opportunities were only available to Corrinne because, in both instances, she was labeled an accelerated learner. In sixth grade, she was one of the upper class members, and in high school she was an honors student. In both cases, she noted that these were privileges, commenting about her history publication: “these were so much fun to do…and the 5th graders always were mad because they didn’t get to do it, it was just us.” Similarly, she noted about her high school publication: “All the freshman English classes would get a copy of the book, only the advanced class made it and then all the freshman got one, got a copy of it.” I interrupted her and asked, “did the non-advanced classes do anything like this?” to which she replied, “No. Just us.”

In part, the stark differences between what Corrinne remembers about literacy learning in school and the artifacts that she had to share and Stewie’s experiences and artifacts might be
attributed to the fact that Corrinne was enrolled in private school—which translated to dramatically smaller class sizes and less pressure to “teach to the test.” However, the stark differences, I argue, can also be attributed to the fact that formal education too often labels students unproductively, reserving self-directed, rich, active, and contextualized learning experiences for “advanced” students. As an example of the different learning experiences available to accelerated and non-accelerated students, in figure 5.9, I offer the course descriptions from Bowling Green State University’s basic writing and honors writing courses.

Fig. 5.9. Basic and Honor's Writing Course Descriptions, from Bowling Green State University, “Course Descriptions”; Fall 2013 Undergraduate Catalogue; 6 March 2013; 400; Web; <http://www.bgsu.edu/catalog/CCLGprint030613.pdf>

While both courses focus on expository writing, the basic writing course emphasizes sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Additionally, though the catalogue fails to mention it, honors sections are themed courses. For instance, depending upon what instructor is teaching the course, students may take a course that is Tolkien- and environmentally-themed. Students who are not privileged learners are too often subjected to a basic skills curriculum while those who are privileged learners gain access to contextualized, genre-specific courses and writing pedagogies, the kind David Russell might argue are theoretically sound and based on
contemporary writing studies theory that understands writing as a tool used within activity systems (56).

It is a significant problem that best-practice methods are reserved for students who have higher grades or who are accelerated learners. For instance, I question whether the sophisticated literacy skills demonstrated in Corrinne’s sixth grade publications are entirely the result of accelerated learners or rather the result of engaged learners who were involved in a self-directed, creative, and fun collaboration. I also question the message that reserving these kinds of “fun” or enjoyable writing assignments for the accelerated learners send to non-accelerated learners. For instance, Intrator and Kunzman note, “the stratification process suggests a singular or at least a limited view of value that tells the majority of kids, ‘You’re not special’—at least not in any way to feel good about” (31). Corrinne’s classroom publishing represents education both at its best and its worst: at its best, a creative approach to education that engenders deep and active learning, and at its worst, a class-based approach to education that reserves best-practice methods of teaching and learning for those students who are already ahead of the game.

*Literacy Learning Online: Virtual Communities*

When I asked Corrinne who or what she felt supported or sponsored her identity as a writer, she admitted that while her family played a role, National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) was most significant: “I think my stuff from NaNoWriMo is important because that’s what really got me kick started, I always liked to write but that was the first time that I actually had to finish something.” She explained what NaNoWriMo is for unfamiliar audiences in her sister’s documentary:

It takes place in November. It’s “30 days and nights of literary abandon.” So it’s basically, you’re just trying to write a 50,000 word novel within the span of
November and you write and write and write and write and write some more and
once you get to 50,000 words you’re considered a winner, but if you do win, you
get a free paperback proof copy of your novel which is really cool and then you
can sell it on Amazon like I did. Buy my book!

Corrinne’s participation on *The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* fan site—where she and others
could share the “weirdo inside” them—was what encouraged her to try out NaNoWriMo: “a
bunch of them did [NaNoWriMo] and they made a thread in the forum and they were like ‘hey,
you know, join the, come check out National Novel Writing Month.’ And I looked into it, and I
was like ‘well this looks really cool,’ and it was a couple of years before I actually did it. And
then I was like okay, ‘why didn’t I do this sooner?!’”

*Writing as Role Playing*

She noted several times throughout our conversations that she was an active writer
online, often submitting to competitions: “I do fictional writing, noveling, sometimes short
stories—only for contests and stuff. I do a lot of scholarship contests online—I never win any of
them—or if I do win, I forget to check and see if I win any of them.” She also discussed
contributing both entirely original stories and stories inspired by what she was reading to online
forums—in the latter case, the writing that she did was often interactive and collaborative,
meaning that she was working with other writers online to reimagine plot lines and characters.
For instance, she explains this as a type of role playing:

I like to do role playing, so like (and I guess this goes along with writing) you
would like type up, you would make characters and they’d be in the same setting
as the books took place in, so I guess it was like fan fiction, and so they would
be—and you didn’t use the same characters, it was your own thing but just in this
world that the author created—and so you’d write whatever happened and somebody else would add on to the story and it would go back and forth, you could have like 5 or so people do them. It’s like role play but when you say role play people think of role play games, like video games, but this is a really basic form of that.

In these cases, there is role playing going on in multiple senses. People are role playing in the sense that they are creating additional characters, using existing plot lines and “worlds,” as Corrinne describes, to create and enact personas. Henry Jenkins describes such activities as these as important and significant challenges to the exclusivity of authorship: “Authorship has an almost sacred aura in a world where there are limited opportunities to circulate your ideas to a larger public. As we expand access to mass distribution via the Web, our understanding of what it means to be an author—and what kinds of authority should be ascribed to authors—necessarily shifts” (187-88). For example, the role playing described by Corrinne also involves people who are role playing the writer, imagining themselves in charge of the texts they have just read and then acting out, as the author and through writing, their versions of particular texts. Citing Rebecca Black, Jenkins notes the utility of fan communities in not just providing opportunities for adolescents to write but also to receive mentorship for their writing: “the fan community can often be more tolerant of linguistic errors than traditional classroom teachers and more helpful in enabling the learner to identify what they are actually trying to say because reader and writer operate within the same frame of reference, sharing a deep emotional investment in the content being explored” (189).

As with her childhood writing practices outside of and those that were significant to her in school, these contemporary extracurricular writing activities were something that Corrinne did
for fun, something that she did within communities, and an activity through which she learned to define herself as writer. For example, just as Corrinne sought out illustrators in her father and in her classmates, as she was developing characters for her fan fiction on the *Chronicles* fan site, she also solicited the collaboration of an illustrator through the sites’ message board or forum, providing details about her characters in writing and receiving graphic illustrations in return.

*NaNoWriMo: “30 Days and 30 Nights of Literary Abandon”*

Though NaNoWriMo is not a collaborative writing community in a traditional sense—Corrinne produces single-authored texts—she explained that part of what she likes about the experience is the feeling of a community behind her when she is working through her 50,000 word novel: “I know a lot of other people are talking about, ‘oh my goodness week 2 is here so you just don’t know what to do’—I don’t know, I guess I just sort of work better, not with other people, but with other people.” She also noted at another point, “you always have people who are around and you can be like, ‘hey, what did your characters do today?’ or fun stuff like that.”

In general, she described NaNoWriMo as very social activity. For instance, there are not only forums hosted on the NaNoWriMo website, but also daily tips and words of wisdom posted to the main page, and participants can also arrange for face-to-face community writing invents, “write-ins.” Each region can have a person who volunteers to take charge of setting up write-ins, usually on a Saturday, where everyone just gets together with food, etc. to work and write in the same space—encouraging each other to move forward and get their word counts up (word counts, incidentally, are also indicated on participants’ individual profile pages by a progress bar).

Corrinne’s involvement with NaNoWriMo provided her with substantial writing instruction, or mentoring. For instance, on the advice of the website, she has tried out different
methods—like turning the text white so that she writes without constantly editing—as well as
different programs. Being connected to NaNoWriMo, she often had access to discounted
software; and, as she explains, once she knew that software for novel writers existed, she began
seeking free programs rather than buying NaNoWriMo sponsors’ discounted programs:

I didn’t do the text into white so much, I just, I have this special program, sort of,
and it highlights the line you’re on as you’re typing, and you can make it full
screen, so I just look at the line I’m on and I just keep going. You see everything
above it, it’s just that the one line it highlighted in a different color so that it keeps
you focused there. It’s called “Jerr’s Novel Writer” or something, it was free on
the Internet. I was just looking for novel-writers, ‘cause like, you can put notes in
the side margins and stuff and it has places that you can put in all of your
characters, so in case you forget what color eyes somebody has you can go back
and look. There’s so many free programs like that…I knew there were ones that
you could pay money for, so I was like, “well, let’s see what’s free,” so I Googled
it. I have so many free writing programs on my computer because I’m a Mac
person.

Though Corrinne commented that “people never really give me advice [about writing],”
she did often talk about advice that she had or was receiving via the NaNoWriMo website. For
instance, she relayed that she had read the book the NaNoWriMo inventor created for the
contest: “The guy that invented NaNoWriMo [Chris Baty], he says all sorts of really good things.
He wrote this book called No Plot No Problem, so that’s specifically for NaNo, but it still
works.” Similarly, when I asked her how she managed to resist editing and keep writing her way
through her novels, she responded:
Well that’s a huge thing with NaNoWriMo. Every week you get pep talks from real authors and the people that are in charge of it and one of the big things is that you have to silence your inner editor, so while you’re writing you’re not allowed to look back. If you don’t like something, they tell you just to change the font color to white so the words still count, you just won’t have to look at it. It’s all about quantity and not quality.

She also admitted that the website influenced the ways that she talked about, thought of, and defined writing—mainly noting that the site further convinced her that writing was fun (an essential component in our dialogue about what defined writing and writers): “everybody that does it [NaNoWriMo] is just so excited about it and it makes you excited. Like, if you go on their website, everybody is just excited about everything so, and they’re just funny and they just do silly things and stuff.” She expressed her own enthusiasm in describing what it was like to participate in her sister’s documentary—in no way does she make it sound easy, rather it sounds like a struggle both with the story or the text and with herself, but there is a distinct momentum that she derives from the deadline:

The process is all about guts and glory. It’s about ninjas. It’s about eating your own soul, eating novels for breakfast. It’s about so much stuff. You start out with what you think is an outline and you go with one, and, a lot of times you get this good start and you’re like “yeah yeah this is what’s gonna happen, where I’m gonna go,” and then all of a sudden you realize, “Oh no. My outline’s over. I’m only at 1000 words. What do I do now?” So then you send your characters to the circus, have one of them drown. I like to kill off characters a lot so then I’m like a little psycho. I’m like a murderer. And then week two comes along. You just get
mad at everything. Your characters start slipping. Everybody is bad. The whole thing is awful and you just wanna throw it away and quit but you have to keep going. You have to drag your feet through the lava and don’t get set on fire. It’s a lot of outlining and just don’t look back. The most important thing is that you don’t look back.

Corrinne’s sister chose a line to close her documentary about Corrinne’s NaNoWriMo journey where she conveys how important it is to her life, not just to her writing or to a specific writing context, but to her entire life: “I use NaNo a lot in my life. I talk about it all the time. I’m always telling people to go buy my books, spread the word about NaNo, NaNoWriMo.” Even as the people who participate in NaNoWriMo are likely to already have an interest in writing, it is significant that what is happening in this community is extending beyond an isolated writing context to influence a person’s whole life and that though it is an intense process (50,000 words in 30 days with extensive editing and revision to follow), people like Corrinne experience pleasure and excitement in the intensity. It is especially significant, as Intrator and Kunzman found, that students most often critique school for failing to engage students as people or connect with their full lives outside of one isolated classroom and to take into account their interest:

Students describe rarely having a sense of being connected to the big picture associated with their academic work…Students articulate this disconnect in two distinctively different ways. First, they detail a general sense that the curriculum does not relate to who they are, and second, they detail how the grind of school renders them unable to derive any intrinsic interest in classroom learning. (41) NaNoWriMo is currently an under-researched phenomenon. Though it is beyond the scope of my project in this dissertation, an in depth study of the practices, processes, and philosophies of
NaNoWriMo can help writing teachers better understand how to generate student investment in their writing pursuits for school. I imagine a study that followed a variety of writers through the NaNoWriMo process—including documentary evidence like that collected and offered by Corrinne’s sister and think aloud protocols (Flower and Hayes) where writers were engaged in in-the-moment reflecting on their processes and practices—would offer writing teachers and researchers valuable information.

Though the message behind NaNoWriMo—just write, just get to the 50,000 word mark—seems contrary to the purposes of academic writing classes where students spend the majority of their time working with mechanics and revision rather than invention and drafting as free writing, that youth like Corrinne experience the “competition” with excitement and enthusiasm suggest that something is happening here that is worthwhile. As important, Corrinne’s NaNoWriMo practices and processes in her novel writing include selecting writing tools, outlining, researching, developing characters, writing (which seems to be a version of free writing), copy editing (done by someone other than Corrinne), and revising.

Larry Burton, a professor in curriculum and instruction at Andrews University, toyed with NaNoWriMo in 2008 at the urgings of his daughter. His experience working through the
30-days led to an article in *The Journal of Research on Christian Education*, where he argued that it was through this experience that he came to truly embrace and understand the importance of invention, drafting through free writing, scheduling, and public deadlines for the writing process. He also argued that the critical insight into how writing happens that he gained from participating in NaNoWriMo in turn influenced his academic composing processes: “I know there is a big difference between written works of fiction and research works. However, *the difference is more in style than process*” (2).

Similarly, in his work with an adolescent female who, though indifferent to school writing, maintained an active writing schedule online that included participating in NaNoWriMo, Jeffrey Godfrey speculated that part of the draw of NaNoWriMo for young writers is the desire “to be appreciated and labeled as a writer; hence, the competition and certificate” (n.p.). For instance, like the certificate for the most recent NaNoWriMo that Corrinne engaged in and successfully completed:

![Fig. 5.11. Corrinne's NaNoWriMo Certificate.](image-url)
As Godfrey posits, perhaps one of the most important things to learn from NaNoWriMo for teachers of writing is the authority that the competition offers “amateur” writers, who become winners not for completing a perfect novel, but for getting through to the 50,000 word mark, upon which a certificate is sent to you calling you “novelist.” However, what Godfrey does not note is that being labeled a “winner” of the NaNoWriMo contest is not so much about a certificate that has the power to label one a “writer,” but the code that comes from that certificate. As Corrinne explains:

I had a special code from “winning” NaNoWriMo—you don’t “win”; if you reach the 50,000 word goal, you win—I had a special code that only the winners get and so I went on to Createspace and you put in the code. You upload the thing, you have to choose the page dimensions, you have to upload your cover art—that’s one of my favorite parts, I love designing cover art, it’s so much fun—anyways, so, then you had to choose whether you wanted it to be on cream paper or white paper and then at the end, it checks and I don’t know if someone has to okay it, because sometimes it’s a day or two, and then a lot of times I have problems getting the right dimensions for the page so that the words fit and everything, so, sometimes they will be like try again, and you have to do it again and again. Sometimes I just make my dad do it; “figure out how to make this 5’8’”! So you do that, you put in your code at the end, and then they send you a free proof copy. Technically, then you are supposed to go through your proof copy and edit it some more and stuff and then, after that, you can, there’s a little sales channel thing on it and you can say “make this available like on Amazon” and you say
how much you want to charge for it. So, mine’s like $10 and I get $4—not even half—but, if you upgrade your Createspace account you get more back.

Not only does NaNoWriMo have much to teach perhaps inexperienced or non-professional writers about the process of creating a text to work from, as Burton suggests, but it also teaches non-professional writers about the process of publishing—the page setting, the editing (parts of the process Corrinne notes she tired of too soon), as well as marketing and royalties. For Corrinne, “winning” NaNoWriMo and receiving a certificate verifying her completion of a 50,000 word novel did give her with a sense of being a “real” novelist or writer. However, I imagine a large part of this “realness” had to do with the fact that she could direct friends and family to Amazon.com to purchase a copy of her novel—as they could any other novel. As one of Morris’ students speculated: “The thought of being a writer gives some people a feeling of intimidation because they think that people w/college degrees, professionals, and authors w/published books only have the right to be called writers” (63). NaNoWriMo sends the message that anyone can create a novel and that that is enough, just the writing and existence of the writing, to be published—as Morris’ student speculates, publishing goes a long way in endowing people with the sense of being able to be “called writers.”

In talking about seeing her work through to publication, Corrinne expressed this exigency, to see her own work published. She explained that even though she knew that the editing of her final published product was poor (something she knew from critical feedback from her aunt and grandparents who had ordered their own copies from Amazon.com), she still wanted to put her work out into the world: “Just because I self-published it, I didn’t care if people thought it was awful editing—I knew it was so, I knew that it definitely could use more work, so, and I was like, ‘heck, what the heck, somebody will buy it maybe.’”
When I asked her how she had the courage to throw the possibility of criticism to the wind and make her work publically available, she credited NaNoWriMo tips about “turning off your inner editor” and also the fact that the option to see her work live was too tempting: “I don’t know, I just thought it was cool that I could have a book on Amazon, so I was like, ‘I have a book on Amazon.’ Even if it’s not good I can still tell people that and they think it’s really cool.” I imagine that seeing her novel bound, having selected the paper it was to be printed on, and then seeing it available on Amazon.com, and as important, being able to direct other people to view her work on Amazon, contributes much to Corrinne’s ability to call, see, and think of herself as a writer.

Fig. 5.12. Screen Capture of Corrinne's (or Enni's) Novel on Amazon.com.

By Pat - See all my reviews
Amazon Verified Purchase (what's this?)
This review is from: The Sweetest Rum (Paperback)
Our granddaughter wrote this book, using a computer web site, when she was 16 years old. I was amazed at some of the facts she included in the story. Yes, it needed a lot more editing and better elapse of time. Still enjoyed the plot and her effort to write the book.

Fig. 5.13. Screen Capture of Reviews of Corrinne's Novel, posted to Amazon.com.
Representing a Self-Identity as a Writer: Enni C. Leowly

As I explained in chapter 4, I encouraged each co-researching participant to create something on their own—indifferent to the dissertation genre—that I could include within their chapter to help readers understand how they theorized writer as a self-identity as well as their self-identities as writers. As Lisette Dillon argues in the journal *Narrative Inquiry*, “The notion of writing about the self in the current work thus sits within a constructionist view of self-making where self is construed as a *project* of self-construction. Becoming an author in relationship with a researcher is asserted as one way to enact a space conducive of ‘tuning in’ to one’s own purposeful accounts of self” (216). Dillon argues from her own research that email is one way to engage adolescent research participants as authors.

Midway through our meetings Corrinne described her process of creating characters for her novels. Talking about her characters was a central component of her development and identity as a writer—for instance, common talk about her character creation (and often assassination) came up during our meetings when she described her writing process to me and when she described talking about her writing with other people, and, this same talk also surfaced in her sister’s documentary. Consequently, I suggested early in our meetings that she might consider using her character development skills and the standard outline that she used in her fiction writing in order to create something that would help readers understand the various faucets of her writer identity.

As we progressed toward the end our data collection and analysis meetings, Corrinne and I communicated via email about her progress on working toward her identity sketches, and she explained to me that she wanted to work out her different identities (like writer, student, daughter, etc.) and provide readers with an idea of “the way I view myself in those roles.” We
checked in via FaceTime in September of 2012, and she began to further outline for me her ideas about how she was going to mix her character sketches with her sketching of herself as a writer:

So, I don’t know how many of these I’m going to do, but they’re different versions of me—like I have a schizophrenic personality disorder or something—so there’s the writer version of me and there’s the student version of me and there’s like the daughter version of me, and just like, whatever like, sometimes in my head I pretend that I’m random things, so…

I have a standard outline of how I do all the characters when I’m writing a story, so that’s the outline I’m going to follow, so I’ll just do that. So, like the name, and the age, and height, eye color, hair color, that sort of thing…and I always have to put down what they smell like too.

In November, she finished her self-sketches and emailed them to me (figure 5.14) with a bit of explanation: “I thought this would be a good visual for how I work when I’m actually doing real characters for stories. These are 3 ‘versions of me’ or what I like to imagine in my head.”

From Corrinne’s perspective, aiding readers who did not know her to understand her self-identity as a writer and to help them understand how she theorized writer identity, she mapped a few of the multiple facets of her larger identity. She did so in a way that illustrates what was for her the most important part of her novel-writing process, developing characters. She is not just a writer, but also a friend (“socialite”), and a people-watcher (“secret agent”). My curiosity was particularly piqued with these sketches because they are part autobiographical and part imagined or projected. I was also interested because when I received this document, one of my working conclusions from working with Stewie was that people resist calling themselves “writer” in part, because they perceive writer as a unifying identity. For instance, I was coming to understand that
people are uncomfortable calling themselves “writer” because it is an identity that they felt would in turn need to extend to, overtake, and influence their other identities, like son, daughter, soccer player. Thus in receiving this document from Corrinne, I came to understand even more so how important it is for students or people generally to understand “writer” as one of many identities that they move between, rather than as one central or unified identity. To take on a self-identity as a writer, “the writer” does not describe or contain Corrinne’s whole person; rather, “the writer” describes or depicts one of many personalities that she performs and imagines for herself.

In a face-to-face followup meeting, Corrinne explained these different sketches of how she imagines herself:

The socialite is the ideal person that I like to pretend that I am in public. I like to pretend that I get dressed up and go to fancy dinners and stuff. That’s a person that’s this bubbly form of me. I have lots of friends, my parents are rich—that’s who that is.

Then there’s the writer, who is similar but more like the kind of person you would see in tights and a dress in NYC—in a beret and walking around NYC and sitting on a bench watching the pigeons and taking notes of them. She explained that the last sketch, the secret agent, picks up on her fondness for people-watching: “Sometimes I sit there and make up things about their lives [while she is people-watching] and sometimes I’ll play these games with my brother where I’ll hide things, on campus even, and I’ll give him clues as to where they are and he’ll find them. So that’s like that version of me.”
Fig. 5.14. Corrinne's Identity Sketches. (How she imagines herself in different contexts or in different identities.)

For Corrinne, these are both autobiographical or actual sketches of who she is or how someone else who knows her might describe her and they are also sketches of the self-identities...
she creates, in her own head, when she is in different contexts. She also often uses writing to project these versions of herself. As readers might recall from earlier in this chapter, a critical component of Corrinne’s identity-building processes is to start by writing down who it is that she wants to be. As she explains: “Even if I’m not like that yet, I’m getting there—someday that will be me.” Corrinne’s self-identity as a writer is depicted in and projected through (public) writing. Some of this writing she controls and authors, like the identity sketches in figure 5.14 or the profiles in figures 5.15 and 5.18, and some of this writing she only partially controls or authors, like her sister’s documentary and the version that I have crafted in this chapter.

Fig. 5.15. Screen Capture of Corrinne's Blogger.com account.

Corrinne’s sketches interact both with one another as well as with other artifacts that Corrinne included in her archive. For instance, across all of these identities, Corrinne’s favorite color remains consistent—yellow—and across the socialite and the writer descriptions, readers learn that Corrinne has green eyes. Similarly, one of the artifacts that Corrinne’s mother contributed to her archive was a “card” that she made for her one Mother’s Day. The card is constructed on a piece of stationary; it is addressed to agent “Top M”; in the “mission” that Corrinne (“Crystal Frame”) delivers in the message, she has coded in her Mother’s Day message (underlined): “the best mom ever.” Incidentally Crystal Frame is a name that Corrinne’s friends
starting calling her when she got glasses and was at one point her Twitter handle as well. As Corrinne explained at one point in our meetings, the card reflected a “phase” that she had gone through: “I used to have this obsession with being a secret spy when I was like, I dunno I went through a stage like that.”

Fig. 5.16. Mother's Day Card Created by Corrinne.

For Corrinne writing is, in many ways, an act of identity play. She can use writing, as she does in this Mother’s Day card, and as she does on fan sites that are built around role playing, to reimagine herself and her surroundings. Cultural analyst Asa Arthur Berger—who has published over 60 manuscripts—touches on this same topic in his self-published memoir *Writing Myself Into Existence: A Writer’s Odyssey* (also excerpted from in a 2012 article that appeared in *Enculturation*). In his memoir, Berger includes excerpts from some of his published pieces, his journals (of which he had a total of 88 at the time that he published his memoir), and caricatures he has made of himself. He includes a March 7, 1976 excerpt from one of his journals where he discusses his identity as a self-creation through writing:
I am a study in self-creation. I almost feel that I’ve written myself into existence in my journals. I developed my mind, my style, my sense of myself—with liberal borrowings from here and there. I may be a fictional character or imaginary being who believes himself a real? Who knows? (26).

Incidentally, Berger and Corrinne not only share a sense of self-determinacy in creating themselves on the page, they also share imagined identities as secret agents and YouTube documentaries about them as authors (click on fig. 5.17 to be directed to Berger’s documentary).

Fig. 5.17. Images of Berger Sketching and Dressing Himself as "Secret Agent," from Joshua Kit Clayton’s,“Arthur Asa Berger: Artist, Writer, Secret Agent, Part 1,” YouTube; 17 April 2010; Web; 19 May 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXCkgMK3q2g>

One of Berger’s articles in The Journal of Communication (1974) contains an image of himself as a secret agent (sunglasses, black jacket, and fake gun included). As he explained in his article, his secret agent identity is how he understands himself as a cultural theorist: “I suggested that I functioned like a secret agent, except I was interested in the ‘secrets’ found in the mass media
and popular culture” (106). Corrinne and Berger imagine, create, take on, and perform personas as writers, and, writers who use video cameras and editing software have “captured” and re-presented their identity play.

**Conclusion**

Throughout our meetings Corrinne often talked about how other people—her friends or family members—responded to her talking about her writing process, responded to her performing her socially-influenced but self-crafted writerly persona. For instance, she talked about her characters in her sister’s documentary, and she also often engaged in energetic talk about her characters in our discussions as well. She would excitedly talk about “killing off” her characters and also about other people’s responses when she had had this same conversation with them, indicating that she knew and intended for such dialogue about her writing to spark listeners’ interests (in the context of her everyday life and in the context of this dissertation chapter).

When I asked her about pushing through the writing during NaNoWriMo, how she handled the 50,000 words in a month, she responded: “Usually it results in my yelling at my characters, which, everybody thinks that’s really weird—they’re all like ‘why are you yelling at them, they’re not real people, you can make them do whatever you want!’—but I’m like, ‘No they’re not listening!’” She also commented in her sister’s documentary:

A lot of people yell at me for saying that my characters are messing up, that my characters are being bad and they’re like “you’re in charge of your characters, you can make them do whatever you want,” which you really can’t. Your characters are really good at backfiring. You’ll try to make them do something and they just
won’t want to do it and then it just gets hard to write. It’s a really hard process to explain. You try to make things happen and your characters a lot times will take over and they’ll be like “no,” but you have to show your characters who’s boss. Sometimes you have to make them like pickles even if they want their favorite food to be spinach. Sometimes you just have to make them do things.

Though character development is an essential part of Corrinne’s writing process—and incidentally how she judges a good book as well—in talking about her writing process, particularly her character development, other people are continuously involved. Corrine talks about herself as a writer by talking about how she has talked to other people about herself as a writer, how they have responded, and what her rebuttal has been. In doing so, she is both crafting and performing a self-identity as a writer—on a social stage for others to see and on an only semi-privately imagined stage where she is experimenting with, picturing, and deciding who she wants to become.

In addition to her participation on various fan sites and the NaNiWriMo website, Corrinne also maintained a Twitter handle and Facebook page. She had a blog that she used to keep track of books that she was reading and to write reviews (though this blog has been inactive since 2009, see fig. 5.18), and she also had a Booksy account (under the name Corlupa). She explained the purpose of the Booksy community: “it’s an online reading/writing community, so you can put stuff on here, like I have this poem on here and I have my whole first book on here. I go on here and I read other people’s stuff and I hope that my stuff isn’t as bad as theirs.”
Corrinne also has a Figment presence under the name of Enni C. Leowly:

Figment is cool because they have contests and stuff. It’s geared toward young adults. They have contests and stuff, which is where I wrote most of these things [points to screen and there is writing accompanied by images—many of these images are in her physical and digi archive]. These are groups that I’m in, like “Mr. Dorsey” is my Jane Austen group, “Youth with Ideas” in my NaNoWriMo group, “Lemony Snicket Fan’s Group”, and “The Hunger Games” fan group. You can do reviews on here, so I have some reviews of other people’s stuff.

She also shared a second blog with me: “This is my other blog called ‘The Writes’ which is things that I wrote about—I would put them on here, like what I was thinking about them…” On May 7, 2008 she writes about needing participants for another blog space where people can post, read, and comment on each other’s writing. On November 28, 2008 she writes about how hard it
is to find time to write during NaNoWriMo, warns others that it is more difficult than it may seem to write a novel based on one’s own life, and wishes fellow participants good luck with their own novels in the last few days of the competition. On May 28, 2009 she writes about “attempting to explain my novel…to a few friends” and having a revelation about how to reframe it as “the *Pride and Prejudice* of the stone age.” She uses her real name on this blog, Corrinne Burns, and writes about writing, about herself as a writer, and about her conversations with other people about her writing and herself as a writer.

![Screen Capture from Corrinne's Blog "The Writes!"](image)

On some of these sites, like Figment where her participation is more current, Corrinne uses her penname (Enni C. Leowly) and supplies more detailed autobiographical information about herself and also more detailed information about her imagined/desired future:
Here, though Corrinne lists her location as New York City, she explains to readers later that she and her sister, a technical theater major, “plan to move there together.” This information was posted by Corrinne in December of 2011. Here she is a student, thinking of majoring in Literature with a minor in Creative Writing, with the dream of attending graduate school in NYC. She imagines herself working in publishing, possibly as a book critic, and writing novels in her free time. As in her identity sketches that she provided for this dissertation, almost a year later, she mentions here as well that her favorite color is yellow.

In the introduction to their edited collection *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*, Dan McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich “use the term *narrative*...
identity to refer to the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and for others” (4). Corrinne actively engages in narrative identity processes, for instance the example from her Figment page (fig. 5.20) and the identity sketches of herself that she provided for this chapter (fig. 5.14). These processes perhaps grow out of her decision in the eighth grade, when she realized that rather than let other people tell her who she was, she would write down who she wanted to become and use this writing as a way to (re)define or to imagine one possible future version of herself.

As McAdamns, Josselson, and Lieblich argue, “Beginning in adolescence and young adulthood, our narrative identities are the stories we live by” (4). For Corrinne, her self-identity is constructed as much by her past as it is by her present and her future—self-identity is about who she has been, what she has done, and who she imagines or sketches herself becoming. When asked to describe herself as a writer on my Writer’s Questionnaire, along with imaginative and creative, Corrinne used the word “self-reliant” to describe herself. She is self-reliant surely, in the sense that she works very hard to determine who she wants to be (and puts it in writing and shares it with others) and then she also takes action in order to become this future self. She is also self-reliant in the sense that she often actively imagines herself as a writer, as a 22-year old woman trying to make it in NYC—flowing skirts, beret, seated in Central Park watching the pigeons, taking in the city and drawing inspiration from it.

In writing, she writes with the authority of someone who is post-college—not someone just beginning—and she is someone who is not hoping to relocate to the city of artists, as she has already done so. This scene-setting does not solely take place in Corrinne’s head, as she mentioned during one of our meetings, she writes better when she physically sets a scene for herself: “I feel like I write best when I’m in a picturesque sort of environment. Like somebody
would come in and want to take a picture of me and be like, ‘this is what an author looks like.’”

For Corrinne, part of taking on a self-identity as a writer is deciding what a writer looks like, what she might wear, where she might be living, what she might look like while writing, and, then picturing herself in this scene both literally in the present tense and figuratively drawing on a future self, a self that is a possibility. As one of the framing epigraphs for this chapter suggests, a central practice that Corrinne engages with in order to claim writer as a self-identity is to “imagine” herself as a writer, and though she is intimidated by the “bigness” of the identity “writer,” as long as she does the action (writing), she is well on her way to becoming what she imagines for herself.

Yet, her writer identity is not simply supported by her own storying, imagining, and picturing herself as a writer, she also has had many formative and ongoing social experiences as a part of communities that were nurturing spaces, rich with opportunities to project her writerly self and seek mentors. Some of these social experiences include: (1) being read (by her family, by her classmates, by her peers online), (2) her experiences with role differentiation (in school and online working with others as a writer with them as illustrators), (3) her experiences talking about herself as a writer (both with audiences unknown and in her sister’s documentary), and (4) her experiences writing and sharing her work with others (at home, in school, and in a variety of online spaces).

While the majority of this chapter focused on experiences in Corrinne’s life that supported her to claim a self-identity as a writer, she felt passionately that her work with me in the study also needed to address what she felt did not support such identity development. As such, before I move into my conclusions which return to my research questions and focus on pedagogical and further research implications, I include an inter chapter where Corrinne’s
critique of General Studies Writing is paired with critiques and revisions of general skills writing instruction from schools within rhetoric and composition.
INTER CHAPTER: CORRINNE’S CRITIQUE OF GENERAL STUDIES WRITING

No real literature, no genuine writing of any kind, was ever fashioned to the pattern of a rule.


Students have a kind of wisdom, one that has informed the field since its modern inception began in the twentieth century; indeed, a good deal of what we know about composing, certainly in school, derives from what our students have shared with us. In this sense, they have been both informative and generous, benefiting the field, of course, but benefiting countless students as well.


Knowing that the audience of my dissertation project was “writing teachers,” Stewie felt that his case study report needed to feature, as a central finding, what inspired him to write, how a variety of literate activities influenced his writing/typing. With a similar sense of exigency, Corrinne felt that her case study report needed to circulate her views, as an adolescent writer and student, about how and what she was being taught as college-level writing. Too robust to be included in her already rich “case,” this chapter’s goal is to archive and share Corrinne’s critical reflections on her then-current writing instruction. Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie have noted, “Inevitably caring, reciprocal, collaborative research will lead to complications, but it may also lead to richer, more rigorously examined results” (22).

In critiquing her education, Corrinne joins many adolescent females who have also taken time to question and critically reflect on what, how, and why they were learning. Jane Greer notes in her brief survey of the literacy practices of girls from 1885-2011 that educational critique has been and continues to be a material reality observable across individual girls’ private literate artifacts (18). As one example, Sue Carter Simmons has called attention to Radcliffe women’s critiques of Harvard and Radcliffe’s “daily themes” that appeared in Radcliffe
Magazine at the beginning of the 20th century, arguing that such critiques “illustrate the gulf between the women’s ways of learning and writing and the school-sanctioned ways of demonstrating knowledge in writing” (285). Further, Simmons argues that student critiques of academic writing are an important opportunity: “providing opportunities for students to voice their own resistance to academic writing does not mean abandoning the project of teaching it. As in the case of the Radcliffe Magazine writers, such opportunities may be the best way to lead students to the critique of academic discourse that is central to mastery of it” (289). In kind, Greer has called for educators to make public current adolescent girls’ critiques of formal schooling: “If educators are interested in making the formal curriculum more meaningful to girls, strategies need to be developed for reading between the lines of the written work they turn in and more formal feedback mechanisms need to be created so girls can share their reactions to the curriculum in spaces more public than diaries and more current than memoirs” (18).

At different points in conversation, Corrinne wanted it ‘on the record’ that she was wildly frustrated with the experience she was having in her mandatory “General Studies Writing” (GSW) courses. Part of that frustration undoubtedly stemmed from the fact that though she was earning A’s on the papers that she wrote for her sociology and literature classes, such was not the case in either of her GSW courses. For example, Corrine’s instructor for the first course told her “you’re obviously a good writer,” but still Corrinne received a “Low Pass” on her final portfolio. Similarly, Corrinne received a “C” in the second course in the sequence, her instructor’s comments intimating, “I believe that if she puts in the necessary time to draft and revise her work, she can be successful in future academic writing.” This particular instructor felt confident that Corrinne had the potential to become a successful academic writer; yet, outside of a GSW, Corrinne was already being a successful academic writer.
Though Corrinne was frustrated by her experience in her FYW courses, she was excited that I was interested in what she had to say and that I was going to capture, re-present it, and distribute it. It is worthwhile to note that, generally, she specifically and intentionally is critical of GSW rather than her teachers. She framed her critique around programmatic pedagogy, philosophy, and purpose. For instance, she equated GSW with the writing portion of the ACT:

So, you know the writing part of the ACT? So, I got a 6 out of 12 on it, and my sister, who is not a writer at all, got a 9 because she’s really good at following directions. She’s like “Ok, they’re looking for this, and this, and this…” And the same thing with GSW, she thought it was the easiest thing ever because you just have to have [put] like this and this and this in it [the essay]. I’m like, you know, that’s important, but who wants to know about that?

To capture and put into writing Corrinne’s reflections on her FYW experience, I share moments of conversation where Corrinne turned the dialogue to GSW in table 5.21.

Table 5.21

Summary and Dialogue Representing Corrinne’s Critique of GSW.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corrinne’s Issues With GSW (Summary)</th>
<th>Supporting Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GSW judged the success of good paper based seemingly entirely on structure.</td>
<td>I’m more into the imagination part of [writing], so like creating. I don’t want to just have to follow the formulas and stuff. Writing is about making something that’s your own, so I don’t just want to do a math problem as my writing assignment. That’s the point of GSW. They don’t really care what’s in your papers. They just care how it’s set up. It’s like really, do you even care what I’m writing about? The thing that bothers me about GSW is that you have to follow specific formulas and stuff— I think it’s important that they teach [writing] like a writing class and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| GSW made writing seem formulaic and/or it made writing too simplistic. | not like a math class [...]. If they’re going to teach it as a formula then call it a formula and don’t call it writing. |
| GSW was asking her to “fit in” to a formula rather than create—GSW did not invite or allow for creativity. | [W]hen the rules erase the creativity of it, when you don’t have to be creative anymore, then it’s just not even writing, then it’s just math. |
| GSW made her feel like her teachers did not read and did not care about what she wrote for their class in her papers. | I feel like what’s in your paper doesn’t really matter. You do a lot of that research work for nothing. It doesn’t benefit you at all...I see why they want you to understand the structure, like having a hook, intro, history, whatever, background history, body paragraph, body paragraph, counterargument, conclusion, I understand—whatever, however it goes—I understand how that’s important, but [then] I don’t understand why it’s important to have it about something in particular, so...” |
| GSW made writing boring, research seem pointless, and students’ arguments seem unimportant. | You know what else really bugs me? They control what sources that we can use. They’re like “Okay you can only have this many sources.” And you’re like, “Well what if I need information from this other source, do you want me just to not cite it or like what?” |
| GSW asked her to imagine and address a “real audience,” but that at the same time, the programmatic expectations for organization, structure, and development conflicted with | I don’t like to write papers, like research papers. I like to do research, but I don’t...I don’t mind writing papers but apparently I’m just not good at it because my GSW papers apparently are awful, that’s what people like to tell me. My GSW teacher last semester, she was like, “you’re obviously a good writer, that just...” I guess, sorta, the thing is with that, is that I don’t like to bore people, so when I’m writing a GSW paper, I think, well no one is going to think this is interesting, so how do I say this so that it is interesting, or I like cut stuff out because I think, well this isn’t really important, and then my papers going to be too short and stuff. |
|  | I’m bad at GSW because I like to make my papers entertaining to read...I guess I look too much at the audience thinking, “ok, when the audience reads this are they going to be bored?” |
|  | I don’t like to bore people, so when I’m writing a GSW paper I think, well no one is going to think this is interesting so how do I say this so that it is interesting? Or, I like cut stuff out because I think, well this isn’t really important, and then my paper’s going to be too short and stuff. |
|  | That’s the reason I have issues with GSW, because I’m like, nobody wants to read this paper, so I try and do something to liven it up, and then usually, that gets me in trouble. |
|  | I’m bad at GSW because I like to make my papers entertaining to read so then I miss out, I guess, on key parts of it because I’m like well, that’s |
In Corrinne’s perspective, formulaic writing instruction, the kind she perceived her BGSU GSW courses to be delivering, advanced a formulaic or autonomous model of writing, void of creativity, critical thinking, difference, and persona. Learning to only write papers for a predetermined and programmatic structure, Corrinne argued, made writing boring and required students to adapt to learning styles and writing techniques that in turn “enabled” them to produce something that was not different from what any other student might hand in. Her critique reinforces the belief that “writing demands,” as Amy Burgess and Roz Ivanič argue, “are also identity demands” (228).

As was the case for Stewie in some of his middle school classes, for Corrinne, the pleasure of getting an “A” for following the rules in her writing classes was not satisfactory. She actually expressed a sense of pity for students in her GSW classes who did not question the course’s privileging of formulaic writing. For example, when I asked what she thought and felt about the people who might be sitting next to her in classes who were writing, and maybe even writing well, but not thinking of themselves as writers, and who were not—as she was—challenging the writing that was being taught to them as a formula, she responded: “They just don’t know any better, they don’t know what’s out there. They’re missing out.”

At various points, I asked Corrinne what she would do differently if she was in charge, how would she change things, how did she think writing teachers could address the issues that she brought to light. In her first brief response, she talked as though she were negotiating as a student with her writing teacher; in her second, she responded as though on behalf of a student
collective: “so maybe just let me decide...just let me write [my essay] and don’t be really, like you have to have everything ordered, ordered, ordered, ordered, ordered like this”; “Sort of let us do it on our own and don’t give us so many directions.” She noted that, in general, formulas might be an okay method of instruction for and an okay expectation of students whose writing processes might be facilitated by clean cut rules and expectations (though she also noted that she felt these kinds of students were “missing out”). She argued that her writing classrooms (in particular) needed to find a way to acknowledge and engage students, like her, who did not need and could not write within a clean structure.

At one point in our discussions, Corrinne remarked that she simply saw no difference between writing an argumentative research paper for GSW about why water bottles are bad for the environment and writing a paper about why someone should ride his or her unicorn to school. She suggested that if passing GSW meant that a student had demonstrated that she was able to produce a rigorously ordered document using sources that are properly cited and necessarily synthesized, she could demonstrate this proficiency by producing a well-organized essay, using fabricated sources, on an unrealistic or fantastical topic.

She acquiesced that she might feel differently or perhaps not go so far as to suggest that writing a fabricated research paper about why one should ride his or her unicorn to school would meet the needs of the GSW rubric, if either one of her teachers had interacted with any of her written arguments. However, the closest either of her teachers had come to dialoguing with her about her writing and her argument, according to Corrinne, was to advise her, “‘your counterargument could be improved.’” In conversation, Corrinne essentially criticized her writing courses for assessing her based on her demonstration of general writing skills. She argued, in essence, that writing skills and structures (1) do not actually exist in any general,
universally transferrable sort of way and (2) a formula, even when paired with “themed” or common course readings, is an inadequate reason to write (or read writing) and it is also inadequate content for a writing course.

Corrinne’s characterization of writing as formulaic and her accompanying critique, though they are one person’s opinion, are not isolated from her class members’ general sentiments about the course (as her email, fig. 5.22, confirms), nor are they isolated from research on writing and writing pedagogy.

Fig. 5.22. Screen Capture of Corrinne’s Email, Corrinne Burns, “Re: Draft : )”; Message to Stacy Kastner; 10 April 013. E-mail.

In fact, it is uncanny how much Corrinne’s narrative aligns with conversations within the field. For example, though the “formula” that she references deviates slightly from a five-paragraph structure, Corrinne’s narrative echoes Marie Foley’s comments about the five paragraph essay in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* in 1989. Like Corrinne, Foley conceded that the five paragraph essay may be “a useful first step for beginning student writers”; however, she also argued that “when taught as the only writing mode, the formula eventually creates a gulf between the student’s self and his or her written expression” (232). Foley posits that when writing classrooms rely solely on a formulaic version of writing, they also alienate students. She asks, as does Corrinne, “What pleasure can there be in learning to write by a
formula? Only the dubious pleasure of receiving an A for mastering it” (232). Similarly, in Chapter 4 of his 1995 edited collection *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*, Joseph Petraglia articulated that in his view, the problem with general skills writing instruction (which he identifies as a remaining fragment of the current-traditional paradigm in composition pedagogy) is that: “GWSI has more to do with ‘doing school’ than it does with teaching students to perform rhetorical tasks” (89). In Corrinne’s life, this is a conversation she and her mother have: “my mom’s like ‘can you just write this GSW paper according to their rules?’ and I’m like, ‘no I don’t want to!’ I was like, ‘I’m trying, it just doesn’t work!’”

Like Corrinne, scholars have also argued that there really is no formula for writing, that there really can be no “general studies writing.” For example, in their well-known 2007 *College Composition and Communication* article where they introduce and forward their version of Writing-About-Writing curricula, Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle wrote, “more than twenty years of research and theory have repeatedly demonstrated that such a unified academic discourse does not exist” (552). Similarly, David Russell argued in the Petraglia collection that writing cannot be separated from the specific contexts (activity systems) within which it is actually used; therefore, as surely as there are disciplinary fields of study, there is no formula for doing, or even such a thing as, “academic writing.” As Russell explains, “adolescents and adults do not ‘learn to write,’ period; nor do they improve their writing in a general way outside of all activity systems and then apply an autonomous skill to them” (56).

Corrinne’s critiques, though not based on a thorough survey of writing studies research or theory, evoke a multitude of available scholarly conversations and resources within RCW that have been and continue to contemplate what kinds of writing students should do in FYW, how writing should be taught in FYW, and how writing should be assessed. The National Council of
Teachers of English and The Council of Writing Program Administrators, as examples, have whitepapers addressing these questions on their respective websites.

Corrinne’s critique in our discussions was framed as a genuine plea to anyone who might be in a position to design writing curricula and teach or assess student writing. A genuine plea from a writing-loving 17-year-old who wanted writing teachers to understand that learning writing as a formula was simply not possible for some students and, based on her own expertise, antithetical to becoming a better writer or someone who was invested in what he or she is writing about. That she expressed such enthusiasm for having her critique both listened to and shared here reinforces Greer’s urging of scholars and teachers to find ways to regularly and publically share and incorporate student critique into curricula, as does the fact that many of Corrinne’s “complaints” are also shared and taken up by empirical, pedagogical, and/or theoretical work, scholars, and spaces within RCW.
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

I’m so wildly unprolific, the poems I have not written would reach from here to the California coast if you laid them end to end.

... 

The poems I have not written would compel all other poets to ask of God: "Why do you let me live? I am worthless. Please strike me dead at once, destroy my works and cleanse the earth of all my ghastly imperfections." Trees would bow their heads before the poems I have not written. "Take me," they would say. "And turn me into your pages so that I might live forever as the ground from which your words arise."


The sentiment as I draft this conclusion is with me, “ah, the poems I have not written”; though, I express it more as “ah, the things I have not collected and archived,” and “ah, the multimodal and digital crafting I did not do,” and “ah, the additional frames and lenses that would complement the ways I have interpreted, analyzed, and re-presented individuals’ accounts!” Thus, I begin my conclusion by reflecting on the limitations of my study, and then, based on my project goals, move into discussions of my conclusions and pedagogical implications, recommendations, and innovations. Throughout this reflective progression, I discuss findings and pose questions I formulated in theorizing and researching writer identity.
Chapters 3 and 4 addressed the second goal of my study—to add student voices to conversations about learning, literacy, writing, and writers—and they have partially addressed my primary goal as well, which was to better understand how people come to call, see, and think of themselves as writers or not. General conclusions about the processes that affect people’s developments of self-identities as writers would require several additional “cases” (Brandt worked with roughly 80 narratives and Heath with 130 families over three decades) and a more inclusive framework (explicitly political and personal; explicitly economic and personal; both narrative and linguistic; etc.). However, the nature of the ethnographic literacy research (Brandt, Heath, Street), the writing studies research (Ivanič, Prior, Roozen), and the computers and writing research (Selfe and Hawisher) that have most influenced my theoretical foundations and methodological practices is, based on well-documented observations, to theorize or conceptually model literacy or how to study it. For example, in Street’s case (1984), an ideological model of literacy (8). In Ivanič’s case (1998, 2004, 2005, 2008), a heuristic mapping for researchers of writer identity and various conceptual and visual models of writer identity. In Prior’s case (1998), a sociohistoric model of writing as literate activity; Roozen’s methods for studying interaction across literate activities, his methods of “mapping meshings of textual practice” (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011); and from Selfe and Hawisher (2004), a model of “emerging themes” from their co-authored, co-researched, and non-confidential investigation in Literate Lives (212-33). Therefore, though my research population has been incredibly small, I offer a textual outline or conceptual mapping of writer identity, one that is inevitably influenced by (1) the scholars I have just outlined above, (2) my training within the Rhetoric, Composition, Writing Studies, and Literature branches of the English Department (as opposed to branches in Education, Languages, or Linguistics), and (3) the fact that my inquiry into writer identity materialized, in many ways,
out of my aural encounters with two female college students’ self-identities, autobiographical identities, as writers (in two different universities, one in a classroom and one in my office, but both in the context of FYW): one, a novelist; the other, “not a writer, just not.”

I address the third and final goal of my study, to find ways for writing classrooms to nurture student self-identities as writers, by sharing co-researching-participants’ direct recommendations for classrooms and teachers. I conclude by sharing my own recommendations based on my findings and the work that is already being done in classrooms and by writing programs. For example, I found that opportunities to experience reader-impressions and that spaces for and practices of publication and identity play or projection seem to facilitate and nurture individuals’ developments of self-identities as writers. Though such a finding arose out of my micro-studies, it has also arisen out of the broader field of RCW’s collective encounters with students in classroom and research contexts, consequently, Jeanne Marie Rose, as part of the WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies, has compiled a research bibliography “to help WPAs promote student writing on their own campuses” (n.p.).

**Findings and Limitations**

My methods of data collection, analysis, and representation and two of the goals of my study—to better understand writer as a self-identity and to add student voices to conversations about and theories of literacy, learning, writing, and writers—have limited my study in the following ways:

1. I focused primarily on writer as an autobiographical identity, largely ignoring (because of limits imposed by time and space) other components of writer identity, like what Burgess and Ivanič describe as the discoursal self, or what I understand as a
semantic dimension of a multidimensional discoursal writer identity, “The self that is inscribed in the text” (Burgess and Ivanič 240).

(2) I focused on how identity is constructed by the narratives surrounding rather than the voices of texts. For examples of how scholars (including Ivanič and Prior) have analyzed the identities of the writers of particular texts in terms of voice, volume 10, issues 1-2, of *The Journal of Second Language Writing* has articles on the “voiced” dimensions of writer identities in individuals’ texts. In short, I privileged spoken words about texts or experiences rather than the voices that are semantically embedded within texts; my study is missing a Bakhtinian perspective; and, as the journal I site here also suggests, my study is missing an international/global/transnational perspective. Any variety of linguistic, narrative, and/or semiotic analyses (of transcripts and/or artifacts) would have helped me to better understand the full complexity of CRPs’ writer identities and also better understand the similarities and differences between how people intentionally express themselves using words, signs, and symbols in texts versus the self or selves seemingly available to be interpreted from artifacts (but particularly artifacts that are archive-able and particularly artifacts that are storied).

(3) I focused exclusively on the stories from and about and points of view from CRPs or their family members, not collecting or representing other points of view, like those of Stewie’s teachers and Corrinne’s teachers and writing program administrators. Though I explored and here told the “other side” of the story (Sullivan), I still only told one side—that of two particular adolescents as mediated through my analysis. Taking this research angle not only made partial and incomplete the “complete”
dimensions of CRPs’ writer identities, but it also did not put me in a position, as was Katherine Schultz, to complete the cycle of the kind of teacher-research that is initiated in classrooms, then goes beyond classrooms, and completes its rotation once it directly impacts classrooms in the context of individuals’ lives. (For instance, Schultz entered Denise’s classroom as an outside teacher-researcher; establishing trust, Schultz gained access to Denise’s literate activities beyond school. Doing so, she was able to demonstrate for her scholarly community [Research In the Teaching of English] that students produce prose outside of school and for purposes other than school and that they often do not readily admit it. As well, because she was embedded within Denise’s English classroom, she was able to negotiate on behalf of Denise, working with her teachers to make graduation requirements “hospitable” [Haswell, Haswell, and Blalock] to her.)

(4) I have conceived of the autobiographical identity of the writer as a self-identity and a psycho-social performance, drawing on Erving Goffman’s The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1950)—as does Ivanič—and interdisciplinary studies of narrative and/or identity. My particular blend of these interdisciplinary combinations first emerged from the works cited page of Cynthia Selfe’s and Gail Hawisher’s “Exceeding the Bounds of the Interview” and from their navigated to approaches to and theories of autobiography, narrative identity, and narrative self-identity, often those that merged psychology and literature. As a few examples, I drew on edited collections like Jens Brockmeier’s and Donal Carbaugh’s Narrative and Identity, Jean Clandinin’s Handbook of Narrative Inquiry, Dan P. McAdams’, Ruth Josselson’s, and Amelia Lieblich’s Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative, and Mark
Freeman’s monograph, *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*. Other scholars have drawn on additional sources or alternative paradigms in order to conceptualize writing as identity/performance. For instance, in their 2005 Braddock Award Winning article “Performing Writing/Performing Literacy,” Jenn Fishman, Andrea Lunsford, Beth McGregor, and Mark Otuteye turned to Kenneth Burke to conceptualize writing as something more than text and as performed.

(5) To use Jacqueline Jones Royster’s and Gesa Kirsch’s terms, as a researcher, I have privileged “tacking in” over “tacking out,” devoting page space to quilting CRPs’ dialogue and artifacts, at times putting their anecdotes, artifacts, dialogue, and experiences into conversation with “T”heory, but not something like state or national standards or the statistics that “big data” secondary source material on literacy, learning, and writing lives offer.

My dissertation has provided in-depth “cases,” profiling and sharing two individuals’ writing anecdotes, artifacts, audiences, experiences, inspirations, spaces, theories, and tools. To continue borrowing language from Royster’s and Kirsch’s *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*, I have provided “fine detail” for my research cases. However, “Life stories mirror the culture wherin the story is made and told. Stories live in culture” (McAdams200); thus, the personal anecdotes, memories, criticisms, and artifacts that I have with my dissertation circulated, contributed, and/or archived, inherent reflect the interconnected pools of geo-spatial and temporal textures or contexts from which they emerged. However, I have not yet exhaustively articulated a view “from satellites in outer space,” and therefore, often inadequate or absent are the “broader strokes and deep impressions” (Royster and Kirsch 72). With this in mind, I would like to briefly articulate a few of what are
inevitably many opportunities (1) to further and more fully develop or contextualize the narrative lives that I encountered and here re-told and (2) to put those narrative lives into contact with other scholars’ work.

Areas for Further Investigation in Stewie’s and Corinne’s Narratives

Stewie’s handwriting dialogue and uncomfortably embodied performances of his school-defined version of a writer’s identity would benefit from being framed by the history of handwriting and typing as communication and business technologies/proficiencies within American classrooms, workplaces, and families. It would also benefit from being more thoroughly contextualized with the conflicted relationship between the economics and ergonomics of writing instruments, particularly keyboards. For example, it would be interesting to put Stewie’s dialogue into conversation with Swanson et. al’s 1997 study, “The Impact of Keyboard Design on Comfort and Productivity in a Text-Entry Task,” published in the journal Applied Ergonomics. It would also be interesting to put his dialogue into conversation with any study that questioned whether something like a patent and/or politics determined the design of a writing technology more so than individuals’ embodied use of or operation of the writing technology and the reported and felt affects (people’s physical comfort), like Stan J. Liebowitz’s and Stephen E. Margolis’ article, “The Fable of the Keys,” published in a 1990 issue of The Journal of Law and Economics.

To continue, Mrs. Daniels’ anecdote about the blank piece of paper Stewie handed in to his teacher would similarly benefit from being framed within the context of historical examples of and scholarly theories about the rhetoric of silence (for instance, Rebecca Moore Howard has an entire bibliography dedicated to how scholars within composition and rhetoric scholarship have taken up silence in their work). This particular anecdote would also benefit from being
framed within scholarship on student resistance (Gorzelsky, Hesse). Similarly, while I depicted or archived views of many of Corrinne’s writing spaces and identities and annotated these artifacts with her reflective dialogue, it would be beneficial to more thoroughly contextualize Corrinne’s literate activities and online personas within the rich research available on girls’ and women’s rhetorical, spatial, and textual identity manifestations on the web (for example, Sharon Mazzarella’s edited collections, *Girl Wide Web* and *Girl Wide Web 2.0*).

**Harriet the Spy: A Missed Opportunity**

One particular point of interest in Corrinne’s “case” that would have benefited from additional contextualizing was her reference to Harriet the Spy in her (self)-identity sketches. For instance, Corrinne advised readers how to imagine her secret agent identity: “think *Harriet the Spy*.” Harriet the Spy, or Harriet M. Welsch, is a spy or a secret agent because she wants to be a writer—Harriet the Spy is Harriet M. Welsch’s imagined “secret agent”-like identity that exists because she too wants to be a writer. Harriet M. Welsch (and the spy) also lives in New York City.

In authoring Harriet, some scholars also argue that Louise Fitzhugh created a feminist icon for young girls. For example, Neva Grant’s treatment of Harriet, “Unapologetically Harriet, the Misfit Spy” (available to listen to or read on National Public Radio’s website), demonstrates that Harriet as cultural icon, when contrasted with Nancy Drew as cultural icon, reveals shifts and changes in children, culture, girls, writers, etc. (see fig. 6.1).
In not initially teasing out Corrinne’s cultural reference, my discussion of her development of a self-identity as a writer missed an essential and crucial influence, Harriet the Spy. I take time to do some of this additional contextualizing that is absent from Chapter 4 here because understanding Harriet the Spy adds layers of complexity to Corrinne’s self-identity as a writer. For instance, Bitch Media rates Louise Fitzhugh’s 1964 Harriet the Spy number 34 on its “100 Young Adult Books for the Feminist Reader.” Immediately following their numbered list of books, in a section titled “Bitch Staff & Volunteers Rave About Their Favorite YA Reads,” Lindsay Baltus writes about Harriet the writer/spy/feminist on their website. Baltus’ reflection (fig. 6.2), explains the importance of Harriet the Spy as an iconic inspiration for female (feminist) writers:
Fig. 6.2. Screen Capture of Webpage “100 Young Adult Books For the Feminist Reader,” *Bitch Media*; BitchMagazine.org, n.d.; Web; 1 May 2013. <http://bitchmagazine.org/100-young-adult-books-for-the-feminist-reader>

Not only are these discussions (and others I will not venture into here) missing from Corrinne’s case study chapter, but I did not ask Corrinne, when she writes “think Harriet the Spy,” does she mean for me/readers to conjure (in particular or any combinations of) the Harriet that is sketched on the front cover of the novel, Melissa Trackenburg who played Harriet in the 1996 movie, or Jennifer Stone who played Harriet in the 2010 Disney Channel television movie? Further, does she mean for me/readers to conjure instead of or also the person who wrote and illustrated the 1964 Harper and Row published novel (Louise Fitzhugh), and/or the person (Bronwen Hughes) who directed the 2007 Nickelodeon television movie version, and/or the person (Ron Oliver) who directed the 2010 Disney television film? Asking these questions, it now matters that Corrinne did not have cable television growing up but did seek out evolving literary worlds (from novels to the net and from there onward).

I have not read the novel *Harriet the Spy*, I have not closely or completely watched the 1996 (*Harriet the Spy: On Your Case!* ) or 2010 television movies (*Harriet the Spy: Blog Wars*), so I cannot know how to conjure many different and collaboratively constructed Harriets (like the one collaboratively conjured by Fitzhugh’s written words and cover illustration, or the one conjured by Stone’s producing, Oliver’s acting/reading, and Alexandra Clarke and Heather
Conkie’s scripting/writing). To return to the beginning of my conclusion, “ah, the Harriets that were there that I did not and even now cannot see!” There are narrative patterns of Harriet the Spy (which refers to a complex culturally storied character) within Corrinne’s autobiography and within my biographical, digital, and narrative re-presentation (s). Now that I know a bit about Harriet, I also recognize narrative arcs that Corrinne is re-mixing/repurposing/being inspired by (Corrinne envisions herself and “the writer” as strange, Grant calls Harriet a “misfit”; Corrinne associates New York City as a place for aspiring writers, Harriet was an aspiring writer in New York City). Thus, this reference to Harriet Spy that I did not take up, tacking in and placing her within Corrinne’s life through dialogue and tacking out and placing her within broader contexts through secondary research, emerges as a limitation of my study and a fascinating opportunity for further research.

Limitations and Findings Concerning Confidentiality and Funding/Equipment

Confidentiality and funding also limited my study in a variety of ways. For instance, I did not have permission to reveal Stewie or Mrs. Daniels’ actual identities and I did not have permission to reveal Corrinne’s actual identity for the majority of the study. Had I had Corrinne’s permission for the study to be non-confidential (and her parents’, since at the beginning of the study, she was a minor), and had I had a large budget for equipment, I could have, for instance, shown readers (rather than just told readers about) Corrinne’s embodied reactions to texts that readily conveyed her writerly self. Since attending Bump Halbritter’s workshop on the artifact-based-interviewing he and Julie Lindquist engage in for their work with LiteracyCorp Michigan at the 2012 WIDE-EMU unconference, I have been intimately aware of the missing shots, angles, and videos of my study.
For the workshop, Halbritter and Lindquist filmed themselves doing an artifact-based interview. Lindquist, in a conversational way, directed Halbritter’s attention to a MacGyver-like bag of tech gadgets he had brought to the interview, and he began talking. Halbritter explained to conference-goers that attended the WIDE-EMU workshop that the clip that we watched was the edited compilation of views of the interview caught by multiple cameras and a well-tested and placed microphone. Thus, he asked us to break up into small groups. Some members dug through their belongings for an artifact to use, others got ready to “interview,” and others decided, as cameras, where they would focus their attention and field-notes, and then, in our small groups, we role-played, embodying (each person from a different points of view) this method of learning about/researching peoples’ literacies.

I role played a camera. I cannot remember what my “angle” was, but I remember I left the room knowing that the literal design of my study, as sketched out on paper for a Human Subjects Review Board, had limitations—I questioned whether or not I should have asked coresearching-participants to join the study confidentially or at least given them the option to participate non-confidentially. I also left the room knowing my study was limited by mediocre and too little equipment and actual filming and video editing skills. I will note that having discovered such design and funding limitations early on, I have tried to address them in a few ways and they have been serendipitously addressed at times as well. As an example, by the end of the study I had revised my project with BGSU’s Human Subject Review Board so that Corrinne’s participation in the study was not confidential and so that I could use, link to, and excerpt from her sister’s documentary. Carrie’s documentary of Corrinne is much better than something that I could have produced, and, as Corrinne and I met in my on-campus office, it
added dimensions to the study that were before entirely absent. For instance, the Burns home and its extension, the BGSU campus (Carrie’s dorm room), come into focus with this artifact.

Limitations and Findings Concerning Study Design and Methods

The last limitation I will discuss here, though there are clearly others, also emerged from a complication in my research design, particularly my methods of “subject enrollment” and “consent.” For instance, I wish that I had thought far enough ahead of time to create a study with primary co-researching-participants and rolling participants. So, for instance, when Corrinne arrived to a meeting with her sister or a friend, her sister or friend could sign a consent document allowing me to confidentially or non-confidentially (in the case of her sister, it would need to be non-confidentially) use the video footage I was shooting, their recorded voices, or any transcriptions that thereafter resulted.

As another example of a limitation/findings arising out of my study design and methods, there are extraordinary, outrageous, and shocking stories that I collected as data and in some “cases,” though recorded, could not share. The data I collected in my study with Stewie includes stories that his mother shared with me that were more shocking than the principal talking to her and her son and calling Stewie’s teachers “loser teachers.” It also includes things that teachers said to me when I spent a morning and part of an afternoon trailing Stewie, taking pictures of the walls of his classrooms, documenting writing wherever it appeared, collecting documents, and sitting in on classes at the back of rooms in his middle school. In just a sentence or two one of Stewie’s teachers chose to share shocking and unethical snippets and details with me, who was there clearly defined as person researching Stewie’s self-identity as a writer, and therefore who also did not think to have asked her ahead of time to sign a consent document allowing me to confidentially or non-confidentially archive her words in my work.
However, while a limitation of my study was that it was mono-vocal, only Stewie, his Mother, and Corrinne gave official consent to have their words re-presented, the way this limitation plays out in the particular examples that I pointed to in the last paragraph, functioned as a protection for the maintenance of Stewie’s self-identity. For instance, though in Corrinne’s case, this complication prevented me from developing the dialogic and biographical dimensions of her writer identity (the interesting things that other people say about her), in Stewie’s case, it prevented me from writing about things that it would have negatively impacted and perhaps hurt Stewie to have read in the chapter had he read it page-to-page (like Corrinne did). At the same time, I wonder, how could I have used my position as person who was researching Stewie’s self-identity as a writer to address the shocking and unethical snippets of conversation from his teacher, how could I have, in that very unexpected moment, been a bridge (evoking Schultz), rather than just noting this teacher’s words in my field notes and here reflecting on the ethics of my having them in the first place?

Inevitably, such fringe conversations and pieces of data—these sorts of happenings—have influenced the narrative archs of chapters 3 and 4. For example, when I shared Stewie’s experiences, theories, and artifacts with new colleagues who study Literature, they noted that I had narratively positioned Stewie within my presentation as “the hero.” I think that as scholars in the RCW community increasingly merge lines in their research relationships and re-presentations—non-confidentially and confidentially co-authoring narratives and creating artifacts that are “‘multimodal chronotopes’” (Nelson, Hull, and Smith)—that as a community, we need to articulate and reflect upon the complications, ethical dimensions, and implications of this new collaborative, or digital, or feminist, or narrative representative paradigm. We also need to know more about the identity implications of the artifacts produced by such research practices;
particularly, how digital stories impact individuals’ (who may be positioned as co-researchers, or co-authors, or participants, or co-researching-participants) future selves. Mark Nelson’s, Glynda Hull’s, and Jeeva Roche-Smith’s 2008 *Written Communication* article, “Challenges of Multimedia Self-Presentation: Taking, and Mistaking, the Show on the Road” is an important starting point for such conversations.

In short, for now, I worry how my turning Stewie (as the protagonist in my own narrative) into a hero may or may not circulate and may or may not in turn impact his future selves. As Nelson’s, Hull’s, and Smith’s research suggests, staying in contact with research participants, following up years later (which is something that Shirley Brice Heath also practices), is one way to begin better understanding the impact of digitally storied identities. I hope that my re-presentation of Stewie, my own guiding of his narrative, the confidential digital story that now exists on YouTube.com, is felt or experience by Stewie as empowering. I can only know if I can look back on this artifact with Stewie, and his mother and maybe even other family members and teachers as well, by adding to the oral histories I archived here, 5, 10, … years from now. Similarly, I also did not ask Corrinne, when she asked her audience (myself and my academic colleagues, committee members, and friends, many of us feminists) to think of Harriet, if she intended for us to think “young feminist,” and/or was/will feminist now be a part of her self-identity as a person and/or writer? If not intended by Corrinne, how will the narrative arch that I have constructed in this conclusion, Corrinne’s “becoming” a young feminist, impact her and her life? It will be helpful in the future for a variety of researchers and teachers to better understand how and why digitally storied identities (as artifacts created by particular people to circulate in the world about particular people who are individuals who circulate in, experience,
and are affected by the world) empower people to imagine becoming in futures populated by multiple and complementary options for identities.

**Findings and Conclusions**

My intention in this dissertation has been, as made explicit throughout, descriptive, answering the call of literacy researchers like Margaret Voss, who concluded her 1996 study of adolescents’ *Hidden Literacies*, “We need more close studies of children and their print and nonprint literacies” (203). However, in talking generally and specifically about print and nonprint literacies and writer as a self-identity with two separate adolescents, our discussion engaged the majority of RCW’s areas of expertise; as examples that come easily to mind: assessment, computers and writing, pedagogy, literacy, transfer, student engagement, and writing program administration. Simply reflecting on the limitations of my micro studies in this conclusion, I have also pointed to additional layers of disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise that my isolated and personal case studies evoked. Even with its deficiencies and limited generalizability, the dialogue I collected in my two separate micro-studies confirm how complex, socially situated, and relative the topic of writer identity, student self-identities as writers, is ethically, pedagogically, politically, and theoretically to the field of RCW.

*Concerning Feminist and Teacher-Research, Action and Reciprocity*

It is worth it to note that I at times felt conflicted, wondering if I could call the type of research I was doing “teacher-research” (Ray) even though it was disconnected from a particular classroom, questioning, what is the “action” of my teacher-research, how am I doing work that is productively bridging various community, home, and school literacies? As well, I at times felt
conflicted, wondering if I could call the type of research I was doing “feminist research” even though it did not focus exclusively on “the lives of girls and women.”

I am convinced by the time and the things that CRPs and their families (whether directly or indirectly involved) gave and loaned and allow me to exhibit and continue exhibiting and archive and continue archiving, that people value being listened to, and that simply listening is enough, is an action that is saturated with both significance and reciprocity. Re-telling and representing CRPs’ anecdotes/bodies/stories/their isolated opinions/their theories have also been powerful actions saturated with significance and reciprocity.

Though my presence in co-researching-participants’ lives did not provide a bridge between their lives in particular classrooms within particular academies and their lives outside of them, my presence did provide a bridge between their lives and scholarly theories—like framing Stewie’s and Corrinne’s respective stubbornness (which frustrated both of their mothers) about something seemingly inconsequential as imbued with meaning. For example, in Stewie’s case, explaining his line in the sand about how he held his writing instrument as a subtle and deeply insightful recognition of what Bourdieu calls the trick of pedagogic reason, a bold stand against homogeneity, and an embodiment of self-reliance or “[Wo]Man Thinking” that American and English romantic poetics might script as genius. In Corrinne’s case, drawing parallels between her lines in the sand about writing instruction and those of scholars within RCW.

Similarly, my presence in CRPs’ lives also provided a bridge between their experiences, their opinions, etc. and English departments and writing teachers—I wanted to, am now, and will in the future distribute their stories, their recommendations, their critiques, and their artifacts. I consider it necessary and richly rewarding to update CRPs as outside audiences respond to and interact with “their chapters”—letting Stewie know, for instance, how cool and innovative
people who were at my graduate lecture, people who were at various workshop presentations at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, people who were at various job market presentations, and people who happen to come to my work as mentors, family members, and friends think his collaborative animated Alien Abduction PowerPoint is.

A future goal objective of my research will be ensuring that I seek out future spaces occupied by people who teach “English” at a variety of levels, not primarily just in colleges or Universities, and who are also willing to listen, value, and have their actions be influenced by the “wisdom” of student voices (Yancey). Another future goal my research will be to ensure that I seek out and triangulate Stewie’s narrative and practices with the kind of in-depth historical and contemporary studies of boy’s and men’s non-curricular literate and resistant activities, as I have variously triangulated Corrinne’s narrative and practices here.

I have wondered, noted, and here briefly reflected on additional moments when my work, work in the world and impacting co-researching-participants’ lives in (self)fulfilling ways (for them as co-researching-participants and for me as a feminist-teacher-researcher). For example, in the rest of the email (fig. 6.3) that I screen captured in the last inter chapter (fig. 5.22), Corrinne explained to me that reading/seeing/viewing what I had done in chapter 4 helped her to better “connect with a specific worldview”:
For me, this particular example is self-fulfilling because this micro-study has somehow made more accessible a “world view” to a particular person. It is also self-fulfilling for me because I sense the opportunity to keep researching, to keep collecting, to keep archiving. Note that Corrinne directs me and any readers who might happen upon her email as artifacts in my texts to her course textbook.

As another, more extended example of (self)fulfillment, after being on the job market, I was eager to telephone Mrs. Daniels and report to her that in fact, Stewie’s grip was the “correct” way to hold a pen. A medievalist scholar at my new institution, Mississippi State University, who was reading a European book on handwriting, approached me after my talk and informed me that her New Year’s resolution was to start holding her pen how Stewie holds his writing instruments because it was actually the correct way to hold pens (as a writing instrument or technology, that the body operates), as opposed to the way that Stewie’s teachers insisted he hold his writing instruments (which was, of course, as the illustration I shared from *Discipline and Punish* confirms, the correct way to hold a quill pen).
Similarly, I was excited to be able to share with Mrs. Daniels that audience members, after seeing Stewie’s demonstration of his “rogue grip” projected on the presentation screen, reported that they could not stop themselves from picking up their instruments and feeling the difference between the two grips, feeling with their bodies the material dimensions of Stewie’s writer identity that so strongly affect his writerly self. It was, of course, Mrs. Daniels that asked her son to demonstrate how he held his pencil and who also asked me to pick up my pen and try it myself, I needed to feel it to get it. I considered it a shared triumph that sharing Stewie’s story had inspired other people who teach English classes and writing classes to not just read or listen to the words of Stewie’s story, not just to listen to or read his mother’s frustration with what might be characterized as her son’s disinterest in/lack of motivation for/in school, but to see Stewie’s story and to experience the embodied dimensions of his self-identity as a writer, to feel with their bodies the sharp institutionalized contours of writer identity that Stewie felt as part of his everyday life. I also considered it a shared triumph that Stewie’s narrative also prompted one audience member of my Mississippi State presentation to start thinking through, metaphorically, other ways that traditional or unquestioned writing instruction reconstructed the how-to-hold-your-pencil-debacle, constructing binaries of practice, there is one right way and one wrong way, and also account for the fact that sentences can contain comma splices.

General Findings

Stewie’s and Corrinne’s respective narratives and contributions also triangulate with other researchers’ claims in interesting ways. For example, in a section of his 2006 article (“Identity Theory’s Needs”) in the journal *Narrative Inquiry*, proponent of a narrative- and performance-based understanding of identity construction, Wolfgang Kraus argues that identity theory needs “a model of identity construction dealing with identity as a process” (104). He
further explains: “This model must also allow for the conceptual possibility of multivoicedness. Such a self in fact presupposes many selves and is not to be understood as a single-other relationship. Furthermore, the identity politics theory has made clear that the self-other relationship should be considered in terms of the construction of difference and power” (104). In many ways, the scenes of Stewie’s literate activities combined with his narrative connection-making across videos and documents and Corrinne’s self-identity sketches and her process/rationale for creating them, provide such a model and also suggest that identity theory does not need “a model” of identity as a process but many models of identity processes.

Similarly, Corrinne’s particular approach to re-presenting her self-identity processes in many ways validates Dan P. McAdams’ “life-story theory of identity” (187). As McAdams explains, “A person’s evolving and dynamic life story is a key component of what constitutes the individuality of that particular person, situated in a particular family and among particular friends and acquaintances, and living in a particular society at a particular historical moment” (187). In an extended articulation, McAdams would appear to explain Corrinne’s narrative and autobiographical self-making:

[1]Identity takes the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, characters, plot, and themes. In late adolescence and young adulthood, people living in modern societies begin to reconstruct the personal past, perceive the present, and anticipate the future in terms of an internalized and evolving self-story, an integrative narrative of self that provides modern life with some modicum of psychosocial unity and purpose. Life stories are based on autobiographical facts, but their go considerably beyond the facts as people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe both past and future to
construct stories that make sense to them and to their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful. (187)

In her 1998 single-authored manuscript, Ivanič argued that her research population, “mature students” in Britain (students who are over 25-years of age) were a “prime example” of what Christopher Candlin, in his 1989 preface to Norman Fairclough’s *Language and Power*, calls “crucial moments in discourse where participants may be placed at social risk during communication, suffering disadvantage in consequence of the inequalities of communication” (cited in Ivanič 5). Ivanič further argues, “Whatever aspect of writing we are interested in is therefore likely to be thrown into sharp focus by studying these writers” (6). Based on my research and McAdam’s life-story theory of identity, teenagers in late adolescence (the transitional years from the end high school to the middle of college) are a population of writers who “throw into sharp focus” how people craft self-identities as writers.

An additional broadly applicable finding of my study is that self-identities of writers are not inherently manifest in a text simply because there is a text and a particular person wrote it. It is unlikely that scholars can research, study, or theorize writer as a self-identity and teachers may not know the writerly selves of students (though this is only one aspect of writer identity) if they look exclusively to texts, particularly if they look exclusively to texts created for school or texts that are alphabetic or, more broadly, if scholars and teachers do not re-conceive of writing as literate activity (Prior). Similarly, it is unlikely that scholars can research, study, or theorize writer as a self-identity or that teachers can know the writerly selves of students without interacting with the dialogic and autobiographical presence of the student writer. As my study built off of Prior’s refashioning of writing as literate activity, it also ultimately confirms Prior’s
argument that literate activity “is not located in acts of reading and writing, but as cultural forms of life saturated with textuality, that is strongly motivated and mediated by texts” (138).

Texts where Stewie and Corrinne chose how they wanted to write (texts where they selected the genres and writing tools, like Stewie’s PowerPoints and Corrinne’s novels) and texts where they chose what they wanted to be writing about (texts where they selected topics, like Stewie’s soccer and Call of Duty pieces and Corrinne’s pre-Revolutionary Romance novel), were often texts that they identified as representative of their self-identities as writers. Yet, they both emphasized that their self-identities as writers were not always readily apparent and sometimes simply not present at all in singular texts, or even particular groupings of texts. For instance, inspired by a range of literate activities, Stewie’s self-identity as a writer, in his opinion, is not always able to be read, embodied, or experienced in print or in assignments created for school. His artifacts created using this medium (print) and created based on his institution’s rules (elementary and middle school), did not always allow for his self-identity as a writer—which is currently inspired by the animated graphics of movies and video games and the gore and violence of Zombie comics—to come to or be represented in the text.

Concerning My Own Conceptual Modeling of “Writer Identity” and Writer as a Self- or Autobiographical Identity

In terms of my own model of writer identity and my own conceptualization of writer as a self-identity, I have started in this conclusion flexing and will now more fully outline how I have shifted terms, repurposing and intermingling language and terminology from work in narrative studies, Royster’s and Kirsch’s work in Feminist Rhetorical Practices, Ivanič’s work on writer identity, Prior’s theory of writing as literate activity, Roozen’s methods of collecting and mapping, and Halbritter and Lindquist’s methods of capturing and archiving in order to develop
a framework that has helped me to understand the differences and interconnections between people’s self-identities as writers and their more broadly crafted writer identities.

As many scholars have noted, identities, literacies, people, and writing are economically (Brandt), historically (Prior, Roozen), ideologically (Street; Gee), philosophically, politically, and technologically (Selfe and Hawisher, Turkle) influenced by and influencing several contexts. In the United States, these contexts can be generalized as global, Western (cultural), American (national), state, familial, and educational. In people’s lives, these influenced and influencing forces and contexts are experienced within “functional systems of activity” (Prior 31). My study has prompted me to think of writer identity as a multidimensional discoursal triad that exists within, constructing and constructed by, these interactive and dynamically layered influenced and influencing forces and contexts.

In figure 6.4, I repurpose Ivanič’s model of a text-centered “multilayered view of language” (that she created by repurposing of her own, Fairclough’s, and Jones’ discussions) (Ivanič “Discourses of Writing” 222-3), in order to represent a multilayered discoursal view of or model of writer identity. My use of discourse draws on James Paul Gee’s explanation of discourses that works off of New Literacy scholars:

Discourses are not units or tight boxes with neat boundaries. Rather they are ways of recognizing and getting recognized as certain sorts of whos doing certain sorts of whats. One and the same “dance” can get recognized in multiple ways, in partial ways, in contradictory ways, in disputed ways, in negotiable ways, and so on and so forth through all of the multiplicities and problematics that work on postmodernism has made so popular. Discourses are matters of enactment and recognition, then. (156)
Placing discourse at the center of my model, I reimagine writer identity as performed and consisting of both and more than “the linguistic substance of language” (Ivanič “Discourses of Writing” 222).

![Multilayered Discoursal Model of Writer Identity](image)

**Fig. 6.4.** My Multilayered Discoursal Model of Writer Identity, mapped onto Roz Ivanič's multilayered model of language, in "Discourses of Learning and Learning to Write"; *Language and Education* 18.3 (2004): 223. Print. Figure 1.

Writer identity is constructed within richly complex contents through a trinity of multilayered discourses (material, dialogic/storied, semantic) that are additionally multilayered in terms of discoursal dimensions (like artifacts, bodies, documentaries, and narrative patterns). In table 6.5, I map what at present seem to me to be possible material, dialogic/storied, and semantic discoursal dimensions of writer identity.
Table 6.5
Multilayered Discoursal Dimensions of Writer Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Material:</strong> multilayered discoursal dimensions of writer identity that are archive-able and/or artifact-ual and/or embodied/felt/performed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Re-Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Technologies/Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Texts (blogs, books, essays, movies, novels, papers, texts, tweets, etc.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th><strong>Dialogic/Storied:</strong> multilayered discoursal dimensions of writer identity that happen in psycho-social and social conversations and dialogic exchanges that people have with themselves and others, about themselves and others, and, the stories, imagined and auto/biographical, that people tell (using images, sounds, words, writing, etc.):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. Accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Autobiographies</td>
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<td>k. Biographies</td>
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<td>l. Commentaries</td>
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<td>m. Documentaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>n. Iconographies (like the poster boards or PowerPoints at some graduation parties)</td>
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<td>o. Profiles/Bios/User Info.</td>
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<th><strong>Semantic:</strong> multilayered discoursal dimensions of writer identity that emerge in the conscious and non-conscious linguistic, narrative, and semiotic features and patterns in a particular or across particular groupings of artifact(s) or text(s) or any of the above mentioned stories in any variety of combinations of modes that they might be able to delivered and experienced in/through.</th>
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<tr>
<td>p. Linguistic Features/Patterns</td>
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<td>q. Narrative Features/Patterns</td>
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<td>r. Remix Features/Patterns</td>
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<td>s. Semiotic Features/Patterns</td>
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Findings and Pedagogical Implications/Recommendations

Throughout our discussions, when conversation turned to the classroom, to learning and to teaching, Stewie, Mrs. Daniels, and Corrinne all advocated for students’ right to write about what they want to write about and to write how they want to write—students’ right to do things in their own ways. Though I did press each of them to reimagine things, to pragmatically explain to me what a classroom or assignment looked like that achieved the classroom’s goals and that also actually got done and that was at the same time something that students wanted to do, it is a difficult task. It requires reimagining everything and a systematic change in the ways that writing happens, is defined or recognized, learning and taught, and also valued in everyday life, families, schools, and workplaces. For example, such a shift might be framed in terms of Mitchel Resnick’s work at MIT’s Media Laboratory. As Resnick explains, in the 1980s there was talk of society transitioning from industry to information, and then, in the 1990s, to knowledge. Instead, Resnick advocates for a different “conception” of society: the “Creative Society.” In many ways, Stewie’s and Corrinne’s “showdowns” with learning to write in institutional contexts was that the pedagogy behind the classroom privileged conformity rather than the comfort, individuality, and sense of play or innovation inspired by creativity.

To further point to scholarly sites where there are answers for understanding how to teach writing in ways that give students “freedom of choice,” in 2007, on Inside Higher Ed.com, Elia Powers profiled Drexel University’s writing curriculum pilot “English Alive” (administered by Scott Warnock, who was then an assistant professor of English). As Powers’ piece explains, “a typical first-year writing assignment asks, ‘What themes do you want to cover?,’ a typical English Alive assignment asks that, and also, ‘In what format do you want to express them: a poster, a podcast, a Web presentation, animation, or, perhaps, a traditional essay?’” (n.p.). The
curriculum includes multimedia and utilizes online message boards, as Warnock explained, “This is where our students are—there is no other way to put it” (n.p.).

One-on-one teaching and learning environments or classroom size also emerged as an important conversation/classroom dimension in my narrative work with Stewie, Mrs. Daniels, and Corrinne. For example, Mrs. Daniels advocated that students—not just the honors students and not just the “IEP kids”—get one-on-one time with teachers or tutors:

What I would like to do is see a period a day where he gets a tutor, 1-on-1, 2-on-1, I’d like to see it small. It’s the crack kids, the Cs and Ds kids. If you get an F in a class or a D in a class, you should have 1-on-1 tutoring or 1-on-3 tutoring. There should be something there and it should be with your peers—not with the kids that are way below and not with the kids that are way above. If you’re on an IEP or if you’re in honors, this isn’t for you […] I think that they need to get the kids that are caught in this crack—I don’t care if it’s laziness, Stewie’s laziness is he doesn’t want to study, if he didn’t get it in class, he’s not going to come home and find it out. Your really smart kids will come home and find it out, your really below average kids will have somebody there to help them; Stewie doesn’t [pause]; that’s… I think they should just go through the grades, Cs and Ds, once a week you have to go and see somebody for [whatever].

Mrs. Daniels also noted that she felt that classroom size was an external factor influencing her son’s relationships with his teachers and causing tension between “the administration” and “the teachers” that was being felt, generally, by the students in classrooms. For example, she explained that Stewie’s middle school, at the passing of a levy, relocated from their old building to a brand new building that shares a parking lot with the high school. When the school changed
buildings, things changed, and one of those things was that classroom sizes increased. Though they had new classrooms, teachers “were not in control of their classrooms,” as Mrs. Daniels noted, pointing out that they were unhappy that someone else was, at times, telling them how to run their classrooms.

Corrinne noted the importance of classroom size as well. Providing demographic information at one of our early meetings, she called 7th and 8th grade, the years that she moved from a smaller school to a larger school, “the worst years of my life”:

I went to school at Millersville, Saint Mary’s until 6th grade, because that school only went up till 6th grade. And then 7th and 8th grade—the worst years of my life—I had to go to Saint Anne’s in town, in Fremont. I totally was not used to it—there were 5 people in my graduating 6th class, so there was only like 40 kids in the whole school, so I was really used to something different…Then, I went to the local Catholic high school. Now, this year, my senior year, I go to the public senior high school.

Similarly, in our later meetings Corrinne noted the importance of her teachers knowing her, who she was and how she was, and the importance of having her teachers respond to her, to her personality and her writing persona, in their interactions with her texts (spoken and written commentary).

These are matters of classroom size (and course load)—teaching five seminars of 25 students who write 5 papers at least twice each in the course of one semester, does not easily facilitate teachers’ personal and interactive relationships over student texts. As Alice Horning concisely put it in “The Definitive Article on Class Size”:
There are empirical research studies, albeit not focused specifically on writing, and other kinds of evidence to show that smaller class size in writing courses improves student success, so it is good for students. In addition, research shows that smaller writing class size improves teaching effectiveness, so it is good for faculty. Finally, the evidence indicates that smaller writing class size is cost effective, so it is good for institutions. (11)

Final Reflections

Since writing classrooms ask students to produce something, it is productive to conclude my discussion of the pedagogical implications of my study of writer identity and this dissertation by focusing on the characteristics of the textual artifacts that Stewie’s and Corrinne’s respective narratives framed as significant, as texts capable of representing their selves:

- As mentioned, Stewie and Corrinne both expressed a sense of excitement over their work being shared with others.
- Many artifacts of importance in both Stewie’s and Corrinne’s archives also happened to be documents that had audiences besides or in addition to teachers and schools.
- Many artifacts of importance (but particularly those created in-school) in both Stewie’s and Corrinne’s archives were collaborative endeavors—whether they were collaboratively crafted or remixed or both.
- Similarly, many artifacts of importance in both of their archives were inspired by mentors (like Chris Baty, the creator of NaNoWriMo and the Pixar production team that worked on Toy Story II).
- Many artifacts of importance for these two individuals also reflected a rigorous time commitment—mostly short-term intense time commitments—from the each of them.

- Many artifacts of importance for these two individuals were digital and/or multimodal; for instance, even though Corrinne cherishes her hardcopy of *The Sweetest Rum*, she designed the cover art and she also used digital tools to create that hardcopy herself.

In many ways, this list closely aligns with Shirley Brice Heath’s conclusions concerning her observations of how adolescents constructed identities as artists guided by/within extracurricular environments. In “Learning, Language, and Strategic Thinking Through the Arts,” Heath outlined four “features” of these non-school environments: “(1) Rigorous practice schedules, (2) Sustained association with professional artists, (3) High-risk performances before audiences of strangers, and (4) At least 10 hours of group work per week over a seasonal cycle of 10 months” (338). She also emphasized that collaborating toward a performance (or group publication) gave adolescents the opportunity establish themselves as individuals within groups: “The assumption of role and a sense of membership within a community of people with similar roles enable individuals to take up different stances toward learning one or another aspect, component, or set of skills associated with a coming performance or production” (339). At different points in chapters 3 and 4, Stewie, Mrs. Daniels, and Corrinne all emphasized the importance of and the joy they experienced (in Mrs. Daniels’ case, that Stewie experienced) in classrooms and through assignments that allowed them to “to take up different stances toward learning.” The difference between curricular and extracurricular environments, of course, is choice.

Stewie was not able to choose whether or not he joined his English classroom whereas he did choose to join the soccer team coached by his friend’s father. When you find yourself in a
learning environment by choice (like a local comedy troupe or fan-fiction website) you are seeking to become, seeking to identify as a member of this particular group of professional comedians. As examples of Corrinne and her history class members’ and honors English class members’ publications demonstrate, primary and secondary curricula, classrooms, students, and teachers do benefit when students are given the freedom or the initiative to choose what they are interested in. Primary and secondary contexts, and particularly Corrinne’s collaborative history magazines, remind me as a college teacher that taking on a professional writing identity does not have to be serious or even permanent—much like role playing, it can be experimental, playful, or half-hearted, perhaps awkward, shy, and maybe even silly.

For college writing teachers who wish to make their classrooms environments where students seek to become or grow as writers—to call, see, and think of themselves as writers—and particularly call, see, and think of themselves as academic writers, the complication is not understanding how to teach academic writing, but how to create an environment that can offer collaborative opportunities, professional mentorship, and well-attended exhibition/performance/publication opportunities for the various academic writers that individual students are able to, willing to, and eager to become—even when the “styles” of communities of academic writers that individuals are seeking to join are emerging or struggling for worth or validity within the academy (collaborative texts, community-based texts, digital texts, multivocal texts, etc.).
WORKS CITED


Godfrey, Jeremy. “A Prolific Writing In and ‘Outside’ the Classroom: Blogs v. In-Class Essays.” *The English Department Conferences at Digital Archive @ GSU: Proceedings from the Graduate English Association New Voices Conference, Atlanta, Georgia*, 25-27.


DATE: December 1, 2011
TO: Stacy Kastner
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [277619-1] Identity Chats: The Roles of Experience, Context, and Writing in the Composition of the Self
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: December 1, 2011
EXPIRATION DATE: November 30, 2012
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category #7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 3 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on November 30, 2012. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
DATE: June 21, 2012
TO: Stacy Kastner
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [277619-3] Identity Chats: Co-Authorized Narratives and the Performance of Writery Selves in Mass Multiliterate Times
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: June 21, 2012
EXPIRATION DATE: November 30, 2012
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Modifications Approved:
1. Change the title of the project to "Identity Chats: Co-Authorized Narratives and the Performance of Writery Selves in Mass Multiliterate Times"
2. Add middle school participant's mother to the study as a participant so that PI can start recording and transcribing her insights and additions that happen to occur during her regularly scheduled research meetings with her son.
3. Conduct at least one follow up interview with participant's mother between September and November.
4. Conduct 2 one-on-one interviews with participant's mother regarding her son's responses to the Writer's Questionnaire and Learning Styles Preference Questionnaire and his archive of writing artifacts.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 4 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.
All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on November 30, 2012. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.
DATE: December 12, 2012
TO: Stacy Kastner
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [277619-4] Identity Chats:Co-Authorized Narratives and the Performance of Writerly Selves in Mass Multiliterate Times
SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: December 5, 2012
EXPIRATION DATE: December 4, 2013
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on December 4, 2013. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.
DATE: March 1, 2013
TO: Stacy Kastner
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [277619-5] Identity Chats: Co-Authorized Narratives and the Performance of Writery Selves in Mass Multiliterate Times
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 28, 2013
EXPIRATION DATE: December 4, 2013
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Modification Approved:

- Include a YouTube video of the high school student PI was doing research with. The video consists of a documentary of the student in the process of participating in the National Novel Writing Month. The research participant herself has explicitly expressed her desire for the YouTube documentary to be embedded within the chapter of the PI’s dissertation that reports on the case study work together since it so readily demonstrates her performing her writery self. The modification, then, is to not protect the identity of the PI’s participant by using a pseudonym and not depicting images of her.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on December 4, 2013. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hrbc@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
APPENDIX B. WRITER’S QUESTIONNAIRE

When you think of writing, what do you think of? Are there kinds of writing that you think of? Are there places that you think of? Are there words that you think of? Are there people that you think of? Are there experiences that you think of? (Feel free to draft a list, respond in sentences/paragraphs, etc.)

What kinds of writing do you do?

What is your favorite kind of writing to do? Why?
Do you consider yourself a writer? Why or why not?

If you think of yourself as a writer, describe yourself as a writer.

If you don’t think of yourself as a writer, how do you think of yourself?

In your opinion, what makes someone a writer?
What kinds of experiences have you had with writing? (Have you ever taken a writing workshop, gone to a summer writing camp, written in school, written outside of school—alone, with friends, with family? Have these been good experiences, negative experiences?)

What kinds of emotions or feelings do you associate with those experiences? Why?

If you had to pick three words that best describe you as a writer, what would those three words be?

A.

B.

C.

If you had to pick three words that don’t describe you as a writer, what would those words be?

A.

B.

C.
Do you have any goals for yourself as a writer? If so, what are they and how did you determine them?

If you don’t have any goals for yourself as a writer, why not?

If someone were to give you the writing prompt, “Writing is like…” how would you respond?