

Telling stories of critical unearthings: A two-part research study examining narrative in first-year composition and dominant knowledge production

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Rhetoric and Professional Communication

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The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2021

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DEDICATION

To my life partner, Erin, who helped me become the person I am today. To my daughter, Raegan, for helping me become the person I will be.

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NOMENCLATURE

CC	Community College
FYC	First-Year Composition
FYW	First-Year Writing
LA	Liberal Arts College
R1	Research Intensive University
RPC	Regional Public College
WPA	Writing Program Administrator
WPA-L	Writing Program Administration ListServ

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Where do I begin? I have done and have accomplished so much during my time at Iowa State University. I have been fortunate enough to receive support and guidance from so many people over the past five years. I would like to start by thanking my committee, who even through a pandemic worked with alacrity on this project with me. I met my major professor, Dr. Charles Kostelnick, as I first started in the RPC program, and his support has been unwavering and invaluable. Charlie, thank you so much for everything you have done for me. Thank you for your patience and understanding through this entire process. My committee members, Dr. Lesley Bartlett, Dr. Craig Rood, Dr. Linda Shenk, and Dr. David Hollander have been crucial to my success during my tenure at Iowa State and this project. Lesley, thank you for your thoughtful perspective for my project and kindness to me. Linda, thank you for your eagerness and interest to work with me. Craig, thank you for challenging me and giving me the opportunity to learn so much from you. David, I really appreciate your sense of humor and all you have done for me.

I also want to thank many members of the English department for my success. Thank you to Deanna Ward, Teresa Smiley, Stacie Schafer, and Deanna Stumbo for putting up with me. I can't even count how many times you have helped me on a daily basis. I would also like to thank Dr. Stacy Tye-Williams for guiding and mentoring me throughout the program and Dr. Jeanine Aune for her continued help and assistance with my research. Thank you to all the other RPC faculty for the countless hours of reading my work, offering feedback, challenging me in ways I would have not thought otherwise, and pushing me to become a better researcher and scholar.

In addition, I would also like to thank my friends for making my time at Iowa State University an experience I will never forget. I cannot possibly name everyone, but first and foremost, thank you Dr. Samantha Cosgrove. Sam, I would not have been able to do this without

you. You were one of my first interactions at Iowa State University and you stuck with me to the end and still continue to speak to me for reasons unknown. I would also like to thank Caleb Evers (BA), Krista Klocke, and Connor White for the weekly Sunday brunches and sticking with me. Thank you to my graduate school colleagues Emily Boyd, Shireen Baghestani, Zach Gaisor, Joel Hughes, and Dr. Raeann Ritland for the continued friendship and support. Thank you to my friend, Kevin Mills, for the whiteboard that helped me organize my sporadic thoughts and make them more concrete. Thank you to my family, especially my sister Shayna and my hermano Victor for always visiting me. I would also like to thank my friends Daniel Anderson, Brianna Link, and Valerie Thomas for coming to see me often. Thank you to my friends in Wisconsin for the continued support from afar, especially Eli and Jewelia Cook, Eric and Lauren Feyrer, Erik Williams, and of course, Brain Scott Yochem for always believing in me.

Finally, I would like to thank my 108 survey participants for taking the time to share their experiences. I also want to thank my 23 interview participants for sharing their stories (especially for taking the time to do so during a pandemic). All of your experiences and stories helped me shape and complete this project. I am both humbled and honored from all of your support as I could not have completed this project without you.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the use of narrative in first-year composition (FYC) and its relation to dominant knowledge production and concepts of power such as ideology, hegemony, and linguistic/discursive power. The dissertation asks the following questions: How, and for what purpose, are instructors using narrative in FYC? And, based on these results, is narrative being used to destabilize dominant knowledge production? I explored these questions by conducting a two-part research study that examined the use of narrative in FYC at research universities, regional public colleges, and liberal arts colleges across the midwestern United States. In order to gather data, I surveyed 108 instructors of FYC with open-ended questions (Part I) and did follow-up interviews with 23 of those instructors (Part II). After extracting themes from the data, I applied critical grounded theory to gain a better understanding of instructors' use of narrative in FYC and the relationship between narrative and dominant knowledge production.

Results of this qualitative study indicated that instructors support narrative reading and writing assignments as effective pedagogical tools in the FYC classroom. Specifically, instructors incorporated narrative to provide students with additional writing and rhetorical skills and to meet course objectives and pedagogical goals. My results also suggested that narrative is often used to help aid students with an increased awareness of agency and provide them with community building both inside and outside of the classroom. My dissertation also provides a critical unearthing of the FYC classroom (highlighted by Kincheloe and McLaren (2011)) by exploring how ideology, hegemony, and linguistic/discursive power operate in FYC to shape the thinking of both instructor and student.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

First-Year Composition in Universities

Of the thousands of courses in various subjects that are offered each semester at colleges and universities across the United States, only one of them is typically required of all undergraduates: freshman composition, or, first-year writing. According to the most recent *National Census of Writing* in 2017, almost every four-year, and most two-year, institutions surveyed had a first-year writing component, whether explicit or embedded. Roemer et al. claim that that the first-year composition course consistently maintains itself as the center of the university as most English teachers teach it, most students are required to study it, and most research in composition centers around it (“Reframing” 377). Moreover, David Bartholomae contends that composition courses are among the most distinguishing features of a university education, as “they represent a distinctly democratic idea, that writing belongs to everyone” (“Composition 1950”). Writing instruction, then, is central not only to the university and the fundamentals of an undergraduate education, but also connects the institution with the public and the rest of the world.

However, despite the prolific nature and benefits of FYC, English faculty and administration often disagree as to what should be taught in the course. According to Thomas Miller in *The Evolution of College English*, English departments often include four general areas: literature, language, English education, and writing (2). Each of these areas then have various subfields; for example, writing is a field that contains composition, rhetoric, creative writing, professional writing, and technical writing, among others. Because the field of English studies is so encompassing and wide ranging, Miller maintains that these fields are largely being examined in isolation from one another (2).

While tensions between faculty may exist in regard to FYC as to what the curriculum should entail, it is undeniable that FYC is a course that has tremendous value for students. According to Emily J. Isaacs in *Writing at the State U*, FYC is often a student's first experience with college and writing instruction. Writing instruction and FYC as a requirement has continued to increase in prevalence, and this prevalence of FYC at four-year public universities and colleges continues to grow (86). Moreover, Roemer et al. maintain that FYC has the potential to influence large bodies of students as a pedagogical site due to its importance of "struggle and change within the institutional hierarchy of academia" (378).

Narrative in FYC

Writing in the FYC classroom often allows students to experiment with different genres and explore different rhetorical situations such as purpose, audience, and context. While writing assignments vary from class to class, students generally engage in similar writing assignments across FYC: narrative, expository, persuasive, argumentative, and analytical. One of the most widely discussed, and sometimes contentious, type of writing assignment in FYC is narrative. Literary scholar Wayne Booth argues in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* that: "Even the life we think of as primary experience—that is, events like birth, copulation, death, plowing and planting, getting and spending—is rarely experienced without some sort of mediation in narrative" (35). More and more, over the past few decades, rhetoric and composition scholars have begun to recognize the rhetorical potency and ubiquity of narratives. In 2001, *College English* published a Symposium Collective of the personal narrative in writing studies. Two years later, compositionist Amy E. Robillard makes the argument in "It's Time for Class" that writing studies needs a more complex pedagogy of narrative. Complex, to Robillard, means a pedagogy that does not dismiss narrative, but, rather, one that takes advantage of narrative's complex and personal connection with students.

Yet, some scholars believe that the use of narrative in FYC is outdated. Liz Bryant asks if the incorporation of a literacy narrative in FYC is “dead,” or, “out of vogue,” asking: “Are writing programs and teachers moving away from assigning literacy narratives to first-year and basic writing students?” (WPA-L). While narrative can be found in many FYC classrooms, more recently the perspectives on teaching narrative has come under a negative perception due to its personal nature and the lack of transfer to other forms of academic writing such as expository and analysis. In a pedagogical climate that has pushed away from expressivist concepts and has embraced more contemporary practices such as “writing about writing” and multimodal composition, narrative can be seen as an antiquated writing assignment (Beaufort; Goldblatt; Hall and Minnix).

WPA Listserv and Research Question One

The conversation of whether or not the use of a narrative¹ in FYC is out of vogue was prompted by a 2013 conversation on the WPA-L. The thread, which has 48 replies over a span of 3 days, reflects mixed reviews. Some respondents claim that narrative in FYC is alive and well, and benefits include increased metacognition about learning, and they can be used a scaffolding device to other forms of college writing (Nelms). Others claim the use of narrative in FYC is a bit too common and needs a different approach (Fox), while one respondent states that narrative is in need of some updating, or, “constructive criticism” as personal narratives can be hard on some students forcing them into “a community or cultural straight jacket” (Haswell). Some participants believe that the narrative genre is often viewed with skepticism due to naming variations. For example, Gerald Nelms writes that the literacy narrative is a “reflective essay,” and should be called as such, while Linda Coblenz recommends that narrative writing should be

¹ The original poster asks specifically about the incorporation of a literacy narrative.

called “knowledge narratives.” William J Macauley Jr. claims that words like “personal” and “narrative” do not “play well” in the current academic environment and “shuts down the discussion before it even gets started.” Nelms echoes Macauley Jr., saying that folks in STEM disciplines argue that narrative has no place in academia.

While reviews on the incorporation of narrative in FYC is mixed, most participants of the WPA-L conversation believe that narrative has tremendous value in the college curriculum, but perhaps that value has not yet been reached. Nonetheless, the prolific nature of the conversation demonstrates the relevance of the topic in writing circles. Now, seven years later, I question if instructors of writing still believe that narrative in FYC is outdated or in need of a significant update, or if the value of narrative in FYC has been reached. This discussion leads me to my first research question:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?

Before I explain how I will attempt to answer RQ1, I want to first return to the Symposium Collective published by *College English* regarding the personal narrative in writing studies and then examine Amy E. Robillard’s article “It’s Time for Class” as both articles impact my research and lead me to my second research question.

The Politics of the Personal

“The Politics of the Personal” is a symposium collective published by *College English* that contains a series of conversations from academics in composition and writing studies that explore the personal narrative in writing studies. Moreover, the collective navigates the relationship between the personal and the political, and how racial, gender, ethnic, sexual, religious, or class alignments complicate and represents the personal narrative. Gesa Kirsch and Min-Zhan Lu begin the conversation by stating:

As more of us are beginning to bring the personal into theory, research, teaching, and scholarship, we think it is important to reflect on the politics of such efforts. In particular, we are interested in exploring the extent to which and the reasons for why diverse members of the profession have responded differently to current professional pressures/invitations to live and narrate the personal within the norms of personal narrative. (42)

Within the collective, various academics speak to how the political impacts their personal narratives. For example, Anne Ruggles Gere shares in “Articles of Faith” that discussions of religion have been “essentially off-limits in higher education, [as] we have failed to develop sophisticated and nuanced theoretical discourse to articulate spirituality” (46). Gere believes that the politics associated with gender play a role in the exclusion of religion, due to the feminization of American religion, and that “it is much more acceptable to detail the trauma of rape or abuse than to recount a moment of religious inspiration” (47).

Other writers speak similarly to Gere, claiming that the personal should be examined more consciously and critically for students to better find themselves in writing genres. Anne Harrington contends in “When Is My Business Your Business?” that the personal is often tied to both the social and cultural: “When we compose stories of our lives we are making choices as to how we will fashion and refashion aspects of our experience and identities” (48); and, “Those choices are shaped not only by our reading of a particular situation and ourselves, but also by narratives that dominate our minds and world at the time, including for me both times of telling (48). To Harrington, the personal narrative takes public what is often a private purpose. However, this background, identity, and life details made public can provide insight to help create a sense of agency as it gives control to both reader and writer.

In the Symposium Collective, authors not only examine the relationship between the personal and race, gender, and sexuality, among others, but also how personal narratives interact with trauma, faith, and other facets of identity.

Time for Class

Two years after the publication of the Symposium Collective, Amy E. Robillard published “It’s Time for Class: Toward a More Complex Pedagogy of Narrative.” Similar to the Symposium Collective, Robillard also explains the value of narrative in writing studies and how it impacts identity but focuses on the issue of social class. In the article, Robillard references how the narrative genre is devalued in composition due to the “privileged” nature of analysis and argument (77). Robillard contends that the devaluing of narrative in FYC leads to the marginalization of working-class students as: “Narrative provides one way of interpreting and ordering a history. Devaluing narrative, then, can deny certain students the opportunity to develop a class consciousness, thereby all but ensuring their uncritical identification with the middle class” (76).

To Robillard, social class is often the most invisible and most ignored mode of identity, at least in relation to gender or race as “it is not visible in ways that race and gender usually are” (87). This claim can be a bit more disputed today, due to the fluidity of the terms, but Robillard’s point is that social class is not fixed as one can hypothetically move from one class to another and that one can also buy clothes to make one less likely to be “marked as working class” (87). This is important to Robillard because instructors are less likely to be able to affirm social class in the classroom, and as a result, they may ignore a student’s inability to be able to afford a computer or textbook or affirm that a student’s “street slang” is a creative, oppositional use of language” (88). Robillard believes that a more complex pedagogy of narrative can help instructors better pay attention to how students write their stories and why they write them (91).

To Robillard, a reexamination of the personal narrative can help show the significance of the genre to students and scholars (91).

Critical Aspects

The central argument of critical theory is that all knowledge, even scientific and unlearned knowledge such as “common sense,” is historical and political in nature. Critical theorists, such as Raymie McKerrow, argue that critical theory examines the dimensions of how knowledge intersects with domination and freedom as they are exercised in the world (“Critical Rhetoric” 396). According to Joe L. Kincheloe in *Critical Pedagogy* knowledge is shaped by human interests, and critical theorists often maintain that this knowledge is not objective as bodies of knowledge change over time due to these interests (5).² As a result, critical theorists seek to critique knowledge that presents itself as certain and final in an effort to destabilize such knowledge and produce alternate forms of knowledge that are shaped in democratic and egalitarian ways. I refer to this destabilization throughout my dissertation as “destabilizing dominant knowledge production.”

In both the Symposium Collective and Robillard’s “It’s Time for Class” the authors make claims about the connection of narrative to aspects of the personal and different facets of identity. Critical theorists often argue that narrative is subtly persuasive as stories often aim to offer some legitimacy for present actions and beliefs (McEwan 87). Indeed, it seems that critical aspects of dominant knowledge production, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. are often interwoven with narrative. However, it also seems the same modes of dominant knowledge production are destabilized through narrative. For example, narratives about faith can either

² For example, this dissertation is not an objective document as I choose to include certain information while leaving other information out. As a result, this project reflects my biases and perspectives and is merely my interpretation and reflection of my research interests.

confirm the dominant mode of faith or subvert that same mode. Or narratives about identity can help support the societal norm and may work to destabilize that same identity. This project argues that a critical lens complements writing pedagogies as the relationship between English studies has often connected educators and students with broader aspects of the world (Carr 438).

Investigating how narrative works critically can help students see their writing courses as a significant space to imagine how language can be valuable and urgent outside of the academy. As such, this project shows that narrative learning, as it is ubiquitous and a writing style that educator and student are already familiar and comfortable with, is linked to the meaning making process of one's own identity, culture, political community, and language. Examining the critical aspects of narrative leads me to my second research question:

- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

Examining how dominant modes of knowledge production interact with narrative can help glean insights into the relationship between narrative and facets of identity such as race, gender, sexuality, ability, and class. Writers from nondominant identities can use narrative to articulate their own complex positions in relation to education and culture.

Research Questions and Broader Implications Overview

My research questions are influenced by a long-standing interest in writing pedagogies and critical theory. In an attempt to better understand the incorporation of narrative, or lack thereof, in FYC and if narrative is being used to destabilize dominant knowledge production, this dissertation seeks to answer the following questions regarding the role of narrative in FYC:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?

- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

The purpose of my research questions is to gain a better understanding how narrative is being used in FYC from the perspective of the educator. RQ2 will be asked in light of RQ1 as an exploratory method to better understand narrative and the teaching pedagogies from a critical theory perspective. While the evidence shows that researchers and scholars are discussing and talking about narratives from a theoretical (Brandt; Corkey; Daniell) and pedagogical perspective (Lawrence; Lindquist; Lindquist and Halbritter) there is little discussion and analysis of how narrative is being used on a larger scale, and for what purpose, in FYC. Just as compositionists need to develop a more complex pedagogy of narrative, according to Robillard, in order to do so there needs to be a better understanding of how narrative is currently being incorporated across various universities in the United States in FYC. This research project seeks to obtain data from current instructors of FYC to gain a better understanding of narrative and whether or not it being used to destabilize dominant knowledge production.

This project contributes to the field of English studies and critical theory due to the increased relevance of critical theory today. With the recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others, critical theory is necessary to examine institutions of power and to destabilize dominant knowledge production within society. Narrative and critical theory are useful for academia as narrative helps both the student and instructor to better navigate between cultural norms and values, which they operate and negotiate with daily. This project has the potential to explore these cultural norms and values by inspiring new pedagogies and by telling new stories in the field of rhetoric and composition and English studies.

Moreover, this study contributes to the field of rhetoric and composition and English studies by providing data synthesized from FYC instructors from a wide variety of demographics and institution size and types. WPAs and instructors of FYC can use the research from this study to form a more critical and complex pedagogy of narrative within their own departments and classrooms.

Research Methods

In order to answer the above research questions, this project takes a two-part qualitative approach. First, I survey instructors of FYC with open-ended questions (Part I), and, second, I subsequently follow-up with instructors surveyed to conduct more detailed interviews (Part II). For Part I of the research project, I conduct surveys through Qualtrics. The open-ended question approach gives participants more flexibility to answer questions, which provides me with more exploratory data for analysis.

The second half of the project (Part II) focuses on more detailed interviews from interested participants. I recruit participants for interviews through the survey featured in Part I. Using critical grounded theory, I conduct a qualitative analysis of instructors of FYC to share their experiences of the use of narrative in their pedagogies. This method allows for participants to help shape the thematic analysis of the study by moving through data collection and analysis simultaneously while exploring the dominant knowledge production interest.

The literature that I incorporate contextualizes the project as a whole. The methodology and results are separated for the survey and interview portions. Due to the grounded theory approach, themes emerged throughout the surveys and interviews. This methodology will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 3 of the dissertation.

Overview of Project

My dissertation contains five chapters. In the Chapter 1, I have outlined the purpose and rationale for my project. I showed how narrative is incorporated in FYC and how the issue is often contentious and due to narrative being “out of vogue” and in need of an update, as outlined through the WPA-listserv. I then examined the relationship between narrative and that of identity, and how narrative may be used to destabilize dominant knowledge production. I also shared broader implications of my project and provide my research questions and a brief introduction to my methodology for answering these research questions. Chapter 2 of the dissertation provides an extensive literature review done by scholars of composition, rhetoric, and critical theory. The gap in literature is further expanded and how my research can address this gap. Chapter 3 explores the methods that I use to answer my research questions, along with the theoretical approach I apply to analyze the data. Chapter 4 reports the results of both parts of the study with visual representation to help aid the reader. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results with a theoretical application of critical grounded theory, summarizes the project, and concludes with broader implications of the project. Additional information that relates to the project can be found throughout the appendices.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the Introduction, I outlined the purpose and rationale for my project. I showed how narrative is incorporated in FYC and how narrative is perceived as being “out of vogue” and in need of an update, as outlined through the WPA-listserv. I then examined the relationship between narrative and that of different facets of identity, and how narrative may be used to destabilize dominant knowledge production. Examining these areas led me to the following research questions:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?
- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

To better contextualize my research questions, the scholarly literature across rhetoric, composition, and critical theory needs to be examined further. Because these areas of inquiry are large and interdisciplinary it is important to examine these fields in relation to one another. In this literature review, I begin by providing a brief history of narrative in ancient civilizations, and then examine the purpose of FYC in a contemporary sense. From there, I look at the literature of how narrative is perceived in FYC and share the case for and against narrative in FYC. After, I give broad benefits of narrative in FYC, I transition to narrative’s relationship with ideology to better understand how ideology is embedded within narrative. In order to examine the critical aspect of this project, I look at critical approaches to narrative and ideology, and then move to critical aspects of teaching writing. I then conclude by examining broad studies of FYC and position my study in the literature.

A Brief History of Narrative

Narratives and Plato and Aristotle

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of how narrative currently functions in composition and rhetoric, it is important to glean information from early Greek and Roman rhetoric and pedagogies as these early histories can help shine light on contemporary practices. Some of the earliest narratives in rhetoric and philosophy are shown in the Platonic dialogues. The dialogues present the Socratic Method through a discussion between Socrates and other characters, regarding moral and philosophical problems. While much attention has been given to the Platonic dialogues by scholars, there has been less attention given to the narrative style of the dialogues. In *Gorgias*, for example, Plato highlights, through Socrates, his disagreement toward rhetoric in the form of a narrative. For Plato, false rhetoric is precisely that of the Sophists, like Gorgias, and does not lead or discover absolute truth. Socrates argues that: “rhetoric is a producer of persuasion for belief, not for instruction in the matter of right and wrong” (455a). Thus, through the narrative of Socrates, the reader is able to understand Plato’s ideological view on rhetoric.

In the later written *Phaedrus*, however, Plato’s thoughts change on rhetoric. Again, through Socrates, Plato uses a narrative to promote his changed perspective. Rhetoric is not seen as something that should “disappear,” like in *Gorgias*, but, rather, something that must be worked with. Socrates gives a speech on the soul of a charioteer with two battling horses, which is used to manipulate Phaedrus through ethical and pathetic appeals. Although Plato does eschew rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, he ultimately concludes that, in the *Phaedrus*, that rhetoric is necessary for obtaining absolute truth, but only if it is subordinate to philosophy.

The narratives are useful for Plato to practice philosophy in the rhetorical sense as it allows him to frame his argument as a dialogue and a questioning model that is used to seek truth, but, while at the same time, he is allowed to employ a full range of literary devices to persuade his readers to accept the full view of the truth. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg argue in their Introduction to the *Gorgias* that the narrative model allows Plato to “stack the deck rhetorically” by modeling his dialogue as a discussion instead of the normal extended speeches during that time period (31). Thus, the narratives serve an ideological function that include an effort to solve problems, urge a thesis, and promote action—and thus the narratives are seen as a rhetorical force. My claim here is that Plato understood the importance of narratives as having a pivotal role in reaching and understanding philosophical truth.

Like Plato, Aristotle also understood the importance of narratives. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle argues that narratives (diegesis) act as a form of imitation (mimesis). For Aristotle, the function of a narrative is to imitate reality. This is shown in the *Poetics* where he argues that the literary arts are “the manner in which each of these objects may be imitated. For the medium being the same, and the objects the same, the poet may imitate by narration” (1448a19-21). Thus, to Aristotle, the function of a narrative serves as a method to imitate an action, and, consequently, substitute it into a form of personal expression. Narratives, then, become representations of reality.

Aristotle expands on his concept of narratives in *On Rhetoric* when he describes the three branches of rhetoric: epideictic (ceremonial or demonstrative), judicial (forensic), and deliberative (legislative). Narratives play a key role mostly in epideictic and judicial rhetoric, but Aristotle believes that narratives role in deliberative rhetoric were less common. Aristotle contends that narratives are used through these types of discourses to help rhetors lead through

parts of speeches to help account for courses of events. It may be important to note that the concept narrative comes from the Greek word “diegesis,” which literally means “a leading through” (Kennedy 238). Because of this, the narrator, or the narration, is used in speeches to lead the audience through a story.

In epideictic rhetoric, Aristotle claims that the narrative is not continuous, but, rather, part-by-part, for “one should go through the actions that constitute the argument” (3.16.1). Thus, To Aristotle, the argument is both composed by the “non-artistic,” since the speaker is not the direct cause of the actions, and partly from “art,” which is the matter of showing that the event took place and of its importance: “For this reason, sometimes everything should not be narrated continuously, because this kind of demonstration is hard to remember. From some actions a man [sic] is shown to be brave, from others wise or just” (3.16.1). To Aristotle, the continuous narrative in epideictic rhetoric can become confusing as the audience is probably familiar with the narration. Thus, in epideictic rhetoric, as Aristotle understands it, the speaker identifies the virtues of the person or object being praised “one-by-one” and then supports the praise with narrative passages.

In judicial oratory, however, to Aristotle, narrative is largely confined to a continuous statement of the facts of the case and the necessary background information. However, Aristotle believes that narrations should not be at length, but, rather, of moderation (3.16.4). Moreover, the narration should “make the thing clear or as much as will make [the audience] suppose that something that has happened or that harm has been done or injustice, or that the facts are as important as you claim” (3.16.4). Thus, to Aristotle, the narrative serves as an indicative of character and is a testament of one’s ethos. Furthermore, narratives sought to express the virtue of a speaker and those of whom the speaker may have narrated.

While narratives were common in epideictic and judicial rhetoric, they were, however, less common in deliberative oratory. Aristotle argues that this is because “no one narrates future events” (3.16.11). Aristotle contends that if narratives are used in deliberative oratory, then they would be used to recall events of the past. To Aristotle, this recollection of the past through a narrative would be to remind the audience to take counsel about what is to come, either through criticism or praise (3.16.11). However, Aristotle reminds the reader that the speaker does not provide the function of an adviser.

Through Aristotle, we can learn that narratives served different functions in rhetoric and oratory. While it is clear that while narratives had different uses that were contingent on the rhetorical situation, they, do, however, contain and share two static elements: actions or events that are described and a representation of figures, people, or objects. Although these two elements are often blended together and constitute different proportions, narratives make up a powerful rhetorical function of description.

Narratives and the Progymnasmata

In addition to the importance of narratives in Greek rhetoric, they also played a large role in Roman rhetoric. Students that participated in the progymnasmata, a set of rudimentary exercises to prepare students of rhetoric for complete oration and mastery of composition, would experience the use of narratives in the second stage, to be completed after they mastered the fable. In the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, a text by an unknown author that is often formerly attributed to Cicero, narratives became an early exercise in expression and became the building blocks for the progymnasmata. Students were to take a factual or fictional story from the poets or historians and retell it in their own words, attempting to be clear and factual. Moreover, the author argues, that there are two types of narratives: narratives based off of persons and narratives based off of events. Narratives based on people should “present a lively style and

diverse traits of the character, such as austerity and gentleness, hope and fear, distrust and desire, hypocrisy and compassion, and the vicissitudes of life, such as reversal of fortune, unexpected disaster, sudden joy, and a happy outcome” (*Ad Herennium* 1.8.12-13).

According to the author of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, narratives based on events fell into one of three forms: legendary, historical, and realistic. The legendary tale compromised events that were neither true nor probable, like those transmitted by the tragedies. These narratives were fictitious. The historical narratives were based off of real events that had occurred, but they were removed in time to help with the recollection of the narrative being told. Realistic narratives blended both fiction and real events, and told stories of imaginary events, which could have occurred. Additionally, realistic narratives were often found in the works of comedies (*Ad Herennium* 1.8.13). Thus, through narratives, students both learned the importance and complexity of character development and the importance of events which leads to the details of clarity and precision.

Like the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, Aphthonius the Sophist also wrote a textbook on the elements of rhetoric in the progymnasmata. In *The Preliminary Exercises* of Aphthonius the Sophist,” Aphthonius speaks about the importance of narratives. Aphthonius argues that narrative is an exposition of an action that has happened, or as though the action has happened (96). Aphthonius maintains that some narratives are dramatic, some are historical, and some political, but they all serve different functions. To Aphthonius, the narrative that is imagined is dramatic, while the narrative that gives an account of early events is historical. The narrative that orators use in their contest is political.

Unlike the previous thinkers, Aphthonius gives a clear description of what constitutes a narrative. In *The Preliminary Exercises* he gives six attributes that make up a narrative: “the

person who acted, the thing done, the time at which, the place in which, the manner how, and the cause for which it was done” (97). Moreover, Aphthonius claims that the narrative should contain four virtues: “clarity, brevity, persuasiveness, and Hellenism” (97). Aphthonius then provides an example of a narrative to the reader:

A DRAMATIC NARRATIVE CONCERNING THE ROSE

Let anyone who admires the rose for its beauty consider Aphrodite’s wound. The goddess was in love with Adonis and Ares in turn in love with her, and the goddess was to Adonis what Ares was to her: a god was in love with a goddess and a goddess was pursuing a mortal. The emotion was the same even if the species was different. Struck with jealousy, Ares wanted to do away with Adonis, thinking the death of Adonis would be the end of the love. Ares attacked Adonis. Learning what has been done, the goddess hurried to his rescue, and in her haste, falling on a rose, she stumbled among the thorns and pierces the bottom of her foot. The blood from the wound dripped on the rose and changes its color to the now familiar appearance; the rose, originally having been white, changed to the appearance it now has. (97)

A student that recites this narrative in the progymnasmata would need to be able to retell it to complete the exercise, but also correctly identify the six attributes that make up a narrative: “the person who acted, the thing done, the time at which, the place in which, the manner how, and the cause for which it was done” (97). To Aphthonius, this narrative would be imagined, and thus a dramatic narrative, and would also be used as a creation story. Thus, through the creation story, the narrative would function as a symbolic narrative, which conveys a profound truth: why the rose is red. Consequently, with the retelling and analysis of narratives, students in the progymnasmata would begin to master the material and advance through the remainder of the

stages of the progymnasmata. Thus, for Aphthonius, the narrative is both crucial and necessary for a rhetorical education.

Similar to Aphthonius, famed rhetorician and educator, Quintilian, also understood the importance of narratives in rhetoric and education. Quintilian highlights narrative and its use in education in *Institutes of Oratory*. Like Aphthonius and the author of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, Quintilian believes there are three kinds of narratives. The first narrative that Quintilian explains is the fable, which is the subject of tragedies and poems (poetics) (369). To Quintilian, fables are “remote,” and although they are fiction, they are not far from the truth, but may appear to be from the truth (369). What Quintilian means by this statement is that fables are unlikely to occur in society, but the truth within them can be beneficial to students. Quintilian also maintains that a narrative can be a kind of argumentation, which comedies represent, and, may have a resemblance to truth (369). Moreover, like Aphthonius and the author of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, Quintilian believes that the third form of narratives is through the histories, which contains a relationship of facts and consigned poetic nature to the grammarians (369). Despite what narrative the rhetoric employs, Quintilian argues that narratives should not be “dry” or “jejune” as they are methods of instruction (369).

Although Quintilian believes that narratives are necessary to a rhetorical education, he claims that narratives should be used with the utmost care. Quintilian argues that narratives should be serviced to students at an early age, when their speech has just commenced, to improve their oratory skills (370). Quintilian maintains that the students should recite the narratives repeatedly and then to recite them “from the middle” and “either backwards or forward” to help connect their words with things and to strengthen their memories (370). After the student is able to successfully recite the narratives from memory, in a plain style but above that of mediocrity,

they can then repeat the process, through writing. Consequently, through Quintilian, narratives become more of an element of instruction and teaching for students, rather than a method of learning a genre. Thus, it is evident that narratives are necessary for Quintilian in the rhetorical education in order for a student to not only grow as an orator but as a writer as well.

Most interestingly, however, Quintilian viewed narratives as important for a rhetorical education because they allowed rhetors the opportunity to refute and confirm the narrative. Quintilian believes that narratives were important because they were argumentative, and theses could be drawn from them: “*whether a country or city life is more desirable, and whether the merit of a lawyer or a soldier is the greater*, are eminently proper and copious subjects for exercise in speaking, and contribute greatly to improve, both in the province of persuasion and in discussion” (italics original 371). To Quintilian, questions often raise in debates, and narratives help work through argumentation and lead to greater persuasion.

Thus, students were taught narratives in the early stages of the progymnasmata to learn the process of rhetorical skills (writing / speaking) systemically. What I mean by the word systemically is that students learned the concepts of rhetoric at first through imitation, by building concepts on previous concepts learned. The purpose of narratives, then, were to move the plot and content forward. Thus, through narratives, students of rhetoric learned not only how to speak and write well, but also how to think well.

Plato, Aristotle, the author of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, Aphthonius, and Quintilian, all understood the importance of narrative in rhetoric. Ancient narratives supported ideological functions, imitated reality, and were the early building blocks of a rhetoric and composition education. Although their uses vary by each rhetorician, it is clear that narratives provided both a rhetorical and philosophical pathway for telling and retelling stories in early Greek and Roman

society, whether it be through writings, public speeches, politics, or the rhetorical education.

Through my historical background, I have shown how narrative is an integral part of a rhetorical education since the early Greek and Roman civilizations and their pedagogical function.

While this dissertation is not meant to be exhaustive of the full history of narrative, it is important to be aware that narrative has played a prominent role in the theory and practice of rhetoric since antiquity. I now wish to turn to how narrative can be used in contemporary composition college classrooms, primarily in first-year writing courses.

The Purpose of Freshman Composition

Before I assess the drawbacks and benefits within the literature of incorporating narrative in composition pedagogy, it is important to understand the purposes and outcomes of FYC to glean a better understanding of its objectives. According to the most recent “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, reading and composing, processes, and knowledge of conventions are identified as the primary outcomes for FYC programs in college education. While these outcomes encompass many different ideas, rules, and guidelines, they all, however, share a common theme of incorporating a diversity of texts for students to read and a diversity of genres for students to write. For example, in the rhetorical knowledge section, the document states that students should “gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers’ and writers’ practices and purposes” (1). The critical, thinking, reading, and composing outcome advises students to read a diverse range of texts (2); and, in the processes objective, students are advised to adapt their composing process for a wide variety of technologies and modalities (2). In the final objective, knowledge and conventions, students are to “understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary” (3).

While this dissertation is not seeking to provide an exhaustive interpretation of recommended FYC outcomes, it is important to note that diverse texts in various genres are important to the outcomes statement. Moreover, the “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing,” claims that the skills that are necessary for college success for students are through their writing, reading, and critical analysis experiences. As such, developing key rhetorical concepts such as audience, purpose, context, and genre, through both writing and analysis, are pivotal to student achievement, as well as writing and analyzing a variety of texts that appeal to different audiences. Therefore, instructors should be providing students with a wide variety of writings and readings that cover the spectrum of English studies. As the “WPA Outcomes Statement” says: “As students move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, their abilities will diversify along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines as these writers move into new settings where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge” (1). Thus, for students to become good writers within and beyond FYC, they must consume and compose a wide variety of writings in multiple genres.

Narrative in Freshman Composition—The Case Against It

As highlighted through the WPA-L, the incorporation of narrative in composition classrooms is paradoxically controversial due to the lack of applicability to other, more analytical forms of college writing. Moreover, participants of the WPA-L argue that narrative is outdated and in need of an update, or, “out of vogue.” In regards to academic literature, some composition scholars share the similar concerns with the dissenters of the WPA-L. Francis Lide and Barbara Lide argue in their article “Literature in the Composition Classroom: The Case against” that FYC is the only sequence of courses that is generally required of all students. Because this course is required of all students, FYC should equip students with the ability to write academic discourse that will both prepare them for academic and occupational writing with a high degree of

efficiency (110). Lide and Lide claim that non-composition-style writing, like narrative, largely ignores the composition components of a course (114). Lide and Lide believe that expository writing should be the main component of a composition course.

In addition to Lide and Lide, Erika Lindemann argues that the use of literary texts like narrative in FYC squanders time away from writing instruction and that it is often a self-centered endeavor by English instructors (312). Lindemann states that the role of a writing course is to focus on the writing process, and the instructor serves as an experienced writer, not a lecturer, guiding students in those uses of language. Because of this, Lindemann claims that using narrative in FYC is inappropriate for the goals and objectives of the composition classroom (313).

It may be important to note that Lide and Lide and Lindemann do not explicitly proscribe the use of narrative in FYC in their respective articles. Lide and Lide and Lindemann are against the use of literature in FYC, but since they do not define what they mean by literature, it is unclear whether or not they would be against the use of narrative. It would seem that they would be against incorporating a literary narrative; however, I am unsure if they would deter the use of literacy narrative. For the purpose of my argument I contend that even factional narratives contain literary elements, so I am operating under the assumption that both Lide and Lide and Lindemann also shun the use of narrative may focus on less of the expository or argumentative style of writing.

While Lide and Lide and Lindemann were writing in the 1980s and 90s, respectively, more contemporary objections to narrative have been logged. Elizabeth Wardle claims that narrative in FYC is a “mutt genre” and critiques the lack of transferability to other genres and writing contexts outside of the classroom. Other educators, like Anne Beaufort, note the

important pedagogical functions of narrative in FYC, claiming that narrative can be helpful to teach students about “meta-cognition of writing processes, discourse community theory, and genre theory” (*College Writing and Beyond* 187). Moreover, she also claims that narrative serves an important function of introducing students to college writing as it is a familiar form for students (187). However, despite the important pedagogical functions that Beaufort posits, she also claims that she removed the narrative assignment from her composition curriculum, stating: “In hindsight, I see that the major writing projects proposed in Appendix A are not the best for helping students gain analytic skills and rhetorical skills in typical academic genres” (“Five Years Later”). Despite the value that narrative has otherwise, Beaufort’s rejection of the assignment shows an institutional push and privilege of analysis and argumentation.

Similarly, to Beaufort, Anne-Marie Hall and Christopher Minnix speak to the devaluing of narrative in their article “Beyond the Bridge Metaphor.” Hall and Minnix contend that the narrative assignment in FYC has been pushed aside from the current institutional climate due to the championing of genres such as analysis and argumentation (58). Moreover, Hall and Minnix claim that a reason that the narrative is often seen as less important than other genres is due to the narrative being a starting point or bridge assignment: “We can perceive this loss of political importance when the genre becomes, as it often does, treated as a bridge to academic writing, or worse as a means of ‘easing students into’ academic writing” (58). As a result, Hall and Minnix claim that the narrative assignment in FYC is in need of critique so it has more value and a stronger connection to the entire curriculum (58).

Another reason why some instructors of composition are against the incorporation of narrative in FYC is due to narrative’s personal nature. Eli Goldblatt claims in “Don’t Call it Expressivism: Legacies of a ‘Tacit Tradition’” that expressivist concepts like the personal lost

status in composition and rhetoric in the 1990s due to writing instruction focusing more on concepts about transfer and school success and professional preparation (441). Moreover, Goldblatt claims, that the personal aspect of writing became somewhat relegated due to writing studies being situated within the “context of higher education budget cuts, larger class sizes, and more calls for standardized quantitative assessment” (442). Even more so, Goldblatt claims that the current “writing about writing” pedagogical movement leads expressivist concepts such as the personal to be seen as less important in the institution.

Other authors make similar claims believing that the personal nature of stories can lead to exclusion in the classroom. Zovera Ann Jacksons writes that: “The problem with requiring students to write narratives in first year composition is that the narrative may become too personal” (“Connecting Video Games and Storytelling”). Jacksons continues, claiming that students who do not want to reveal anything personal may struggle with the assignment and end up not telling a story at all. This feeling of struggle may turn away students from academic writing. Carol Gulyas shares similar concerns, claiming that evaluating a narrative is often difficult due to the personal nature: “How can I correct the life-stories of my students, if they are told by them, in their own language?” (“Reflections on Telling Stories” 190). Similarly, Clancy Ratliff speaks to these notions of narrative being too personal, claiming that: “I welcome personal writing from students when that’s what they want to write [. . .] but I’m not comfortable requiring it. I hated doing personal writing for classes when I was an undergraduate student.” (WPA-L 26 July). J. Blake Scott also notes that some students are hesitant to share their stories “because they view it as too personal than because they view it as uninteresting or insignificant” (“Production Pedagogy” 109). Indeed, these writers are largely against the inclusion of narrative in FYC due to the personal aspects of the genre.

While there are many different arguments for the case against narrative in FYC, the ones that seem the most salient are that narrative is less desirable than analytical forms of college writing like exposition and argumentation, the lack of transfer to other writing assignments inside and outside of the composition classroom, and the personal nature of the narrative genre. I will now examine the case for narrative in FYC.

Narrative in Freshman Composition —The Case for It

Despite the opposition among some scholars of incorporating narrative in FYC, some compositionists still advocate and encourage the usage. Frank D'Angelo elaborates in his article "What Should College English Be?" that literary features can be found in all forms of genre and the texts that FYC students study are not as important as the skills that they are taught (90). Terry Eagleton also claims in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* that literary features, such as sound, rhythm, devices, narrative techniques, etc., can be found in any text (1). Additionally, Judith Goleman operates under the assumption that language is by nature social. Because of this, and in order to gain power and independence through literacy, Goleman maintains that the basic writer must "become a more knowing participant in the social dialogue which constitutes all discourse" ("Dialogic Imagination" 132).

D'Angelo also proposes that every text has a rhetorical, poetic, and referential function, and that what educators produce and write about in English departments is the cultural text (89). D'Angelo defines the cultural text as not only narrative, but also persuasive and expository kinds (newspapers, magazine articles, political speeches), as well as the texts of popular culture and visual texts (90). To D'Angelo, a text's function means a kind of activity or orientation toward what texts do for educators and students, rather than what they mean: "We simply don't have enough time to teach everything written in English. That's why we should teach the cultural text,

including the visual text and the texts of popular culture” (92). As such, a more diverse canon of text that includes both expository writing and narrative writing can aid in curriculum building.

Moreover, D’ Angelo believes that having multiple genres of text in FYC can help English departments explain more fully to students, administrators, and the general public as to what English faculty do exactly: “We produce, read about, evaluate and write about all kinds of text, not just imaginative literature, emphasizing their various functions, and we teach our students to do the same things, thus making them better citizens” (92). To D’ Angelo, if students are able to read a wide variety of texts, then they are better able to engage in more dialogues.

Further evidence for including the teaching of narrative in FYC is seen through the work of Emily Isaacs. In her article “Teaching General Education Writing: Is There a Place for Literature?” she posits that if FYC courses are well-structured in writing about literature, then students can develop their abilities to better support general claims, as well as grapple with intellectually challenging ideas, all while engaging with the pedagogies of process-writing instruction that emphasizes revision (100). Isaacs maintains that if the goal of composition programs is to provide multiple opportunities for process-writing instruction, and to teach writing well and heuristically, then composition faculty need to put away the “personal, professional, and even theoretical arguments against literary studies” and consider who is in the best position to teach writing well, and with what material (100).

Course Objectives

Additional benefits of narrative as a part of a curriculum in FYC is shown through Julie Lindquist and Bump Halbritter in their article “Documenting and Discovering Learning.” In the article they argue that narrative in FYC can encourage students to better understand themselves as both learner and student (414). Moreover, the incorporation of narrative can help students meet course objectives through documenting and discovering learning as the incorporation of

narrative can be designed to scaffold and lead students through a structures series of moves that feature inquiry and discovery (417).

Similar to Lindquist and Halbritter, J. Blake Scott also speaks to how narrative can help meet course objectives for students in FYC. Scott claims that a narrative assignment is generally a starting point in FYC that leads to further interrogation and reflection (“Production Pedagogy” 111). Moreover, Scott maintains that incorporating narrative as a starting point can lead to stronger argumentative essays as a narrative allows a student to “stake out a position” (111).

Pedagogical Goals

Like course objectives, the incorporation of narrative in FYC can also help instructors reach a wide variety of pedagogical goals. As Robert Nash argues, personal narratives “help educators and students to understand our histories, shape our destinies, develop our moral imaginations, and give us something truly worth living and dying for. [. . .] When done in an intellectually and emotionally respectable way, personal narrative writing can result in stunning self-insights” (3). Moreover, the incorporation of a narrative provides an ongoing opportunity for learning interventions and facilitate transition to college writing by enabling first-year college students to college writing using familiar rhetorical principles (narrativizing) (Lindquist and Halbritter 418).

Other pedagogical goals that narrative helps in the FYC classroom is instilling confidence in student writers. J. Blake Scott claims that narrative can “help validate students as authors and writers” as “an emphasis on writing their own narratives tells students that their stories and texts are the center of the course and worthy of study” (112). Caleb Corkery echoes Scott in “Literacy Narratives and Confidence Building in the Writing Classroom,” arguing that students must develop their “academic voices” out of the identities they bring with them to college, and composition classrooms can provide the most support for students to “discover, explore, and

develop their authentic voices” (49). To Corkery, one of the most powerful features of a narrative in a writing classroom is to “witness to the process of making the transition into a new, more empowering linguistic community” (49). As a result, a narrative writing assignment can help provide ethos to students who are inexperienced or lack confidence in an academic writing setting (49).

Writing Skills

The incorporation of narrative in FYC can also provide students with writing and rhetorical skills. For example, students create life stories that serve current educational projects and also acquire transferrable rhetorical knowledge through the practice of narrative inquiry (Lindquist and Halbritter 439). Moreover, a narrative assignment can provide a strong introduction to expository and persuasive writing and the overlapping aims of discourse (Raymond 21). James Phlean further argues that teaching students to read and write narratives creates “narrative as rhetoric” with a “design on its audience,” which can lead students to better understand audience expectations (219). The incorporation of narrative can also build trust between educator and student as students better learn themselves through their writing (Raymond 20).

Additional Benefits of Narrative in FYC

Additional benefits of narrative in the FYC classroom include students gaining cultural and political value and helping shape identity and language. For example, in Robert Scholes’ article “An End to Hypocriticism” he claims: “The political enters the study of English primarily through questions of presentation: who is represented, who does the representing, who is object, who is subject – and how do these representations connect to the values of groups, communities, classes, tribes, sects, and nations?” (153). Isaacs speaks similarly to Scott saying a composition course with genres like narrative can help students deal with ideological and cultural analyses:

“reading and writing about texts *as* texts that are embedded in a rich context of writers’ and readers’ cultural, political, and historical experiences (“Teaching Education Writing” emphasis original, 111). I will now examine how narrative can have value in FYC by examining how narratives shape cultural value and identity.

Narrative Shapes Cultural Values

Additional support for narrative shaping cultural experience is shown through Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. While not compositionists, the authors still provide interesting interpretations of narrative and their relation to experience in their book *A Guide for Interpreting Life Narrative*. Smith and Watson claim that the significance of the past is shaped by the narratives told about it. As a result, narratives are helpful to understand the present, to envision possible futures, and to remember the past. Moreover, Smith and Watson argue that narrative addresses readers whom they want to persuade of their version of their experience (7). Additionally, a narrative deals with a dynamic process of subjectivity, with issues such as memory, experience, identity, and space. Smith and Watson maintain that memory and experience are tied with history, and that how people remember, what they remember, and who does the remembering, is historically significant (23). Moreover, a culture influences the understanding of a particular moment and of a particular history. To the authors, these moments and histories shapes one’s memory. What counts as experience, however, changes over time with broader cultural transformations of collective history (32).

According to Debra Journet, Beth Boehm, and Cynthia Britt, in their text *Narrative Acts*, narratives are important for disciplines such as anthropology and cultural studies, as the discipline creates narrative knowledge. Genres like ethnography and autoethnography give persuasive power to convince readers of places and cultures that they have not been to (13). Moreover, anthropologists have considered the power relations in ethnographic projects,

deciding who gets to narrate, who gets to speak for whom, whose voices are heard, and who even gate keeps and controls the knowledge (13-14). As a result, ethnographic narratives explore both cultures and groups of people in which people and communities are entangled with one another (14).

It is hard to imagine fields that do not incorporate or use narrative. Indeed, narrative is used through medicine, experimental science, acting, psychology, teaching, and law, among others due to the ubiquity and importance of storytelling.

Narrative Shapes Identity

In addition to shaping cultural experience, other benefits of narrative in FYC include the shaping of identity. Carolyn Clark argues in “Off the Beaten Path” that the stories that individuals tell about themselves, and the way in which they organize, write, and edit those stories, help to shape their identity. Moreover, she claims that narratives help with making sense of the world through stories, through the use of meaning, and the particular experience of human existence lived over time. To Clark, narratives are closely linked with understanding of oneself: “It is probably through the examination of our own stories that we can begin to understand the underlying purpose of narrative, which is to enable us to make sense of our experience. Because we are instinctive storyteller, there is a fundamental mode of meaning-making” (87). Clark contends that narratives are not just the ways in which one tells others of their lives, but also the means by which identities may be fashioned due to the sensemaking and examination of one’s own story.

Because of the connection between narrative and identity, stories about oneself offer great potential to not only help construct an identity, but, also, to enact personal change. Clark argues that the personal narratives have a social dimension, as they are often shaped by the culture in which they are embedded, and through which they both are given and give meaning.

According to Karl Scheibel and Frank Barrett in “The Narrative as the Root Metaphor for Contextualism,” that “we live in “a story-shaped world,” where we are surrounded by narratives of all kinds (63). Stories such as myths and folklore, popular television shows and movies, and religious histories and parables, are all narratives that embody and shape our cultural values. Additionally, Clark further states that personal narratives are also social because they require an audience: “whether real or an imagined Other, or even the self. In that sense we can think of these stories as performances, played out in multiple ways but always referencing cultural norms (88).

Narratives Shape Political Community

In addition to narratives shaping individual identity, some scholars believe they also constitute a community’s identity and sustain its institutions, practices, and values. In “Reading the Personal,” Min-Zhan Lu argues that narratives provide political responsibility for the reader. Lu maintains that a writer chooses what backgrounds, identities, and life details to make public and that there are consciously choosing a type of professional and political purpose with their narrative (53). But Lu also places responsibility on the readers of narratives:

As readers, we need to be equally vigilant towards the ways in which the either/or mentality sets us in motion, urging us to operate as butterfly collectors, fixated on reducing and displaying the position of the writer at the cost of ignoring the writer’s often complex and alternative textual moves as well as the writer’s complex dynamic relations to the world. (54)

To Lu, readers need to be more vigilant toward the values and expectations that writers bring to their texts. Additionally, she maintains that readers not only need to be interested in the narrative content, but also the act of writing itself, and to also be attentive to what the writer is trying to do, such as how the writer goes about approaching certain lived experiences.

David Carr speaks similarly to Lu, in his text *Time, Narrative, and History* also discusses the importance of narratives to communal identity:

[A] group's temporally persisting existence as a community, and as a social subject of experience and action, is not different from the story that is told about it; it too is constituted by a story *of* the community, of what it is and what it is doing, which is told, acted out, and received and accepted in a kind of self-reflective social narration. (italics original 149-150)

To Carr, narrative functions to unify groups of people. The practical and social functions of narratives seek to shape communities while also acknowledging the potential of alternative stories to challenge or redirect a community's key stories. This is also shown through Anne Herrington's "When is my Business your Business" where she argues that narratives help provide a sense of agency for individuals, which gives control to the reader: "We should make the choice as to what of our personal lives we feel should be made public on the basis of our own sense of professional and political purposes" (48). As a result, the stories of one's life not only create and reflect on individual experience, but also are tied to a political community.

Narratives Shape Language

Much like narrative shaping political community, some scholars attest to how narrative shapes language to make sense of the world. One example is through a narrative such as a counterstory. A counterstory is a tool used by marginalized communities to tell stories that reflect nondominant perspectives and experiences. Aja Martinez, in her article "A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory" argues that, through counterstories, people of color can better make sense and understand their language: "As an interdisciplinary method, CRT [Critical Race Theory] counterstory recognizes that the experienced and embodied knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racism that is often well disguised in the

rhetoric of normalized structural values and practices” (69). To Martinez, the idea of normalized structures is often told through stock stories as they feign neutrality and avoid blaming, or taking responsibility, for social inequality (70). As a result, stock stories are often canonized and normalized, and they become a standard of reality. Martinez believes that through the narrative of counterstory, the institutions of power can be exposed, analyzed, and challenged. Martinez further argues that counterstories develop an author’s marginalized viewpoint and critiques the viewpoint put forth by the stock story. Counterstory as a narrative, then, becomes a response for students to fight against the white supremacy that exists within western society and the classroom, as they struggle to make their words work.

Additionally, in “Articles of Faith,” Anne Ruggles Gere argues that narratives are helpful for understanding and making sense of taboo topics such as religion. To Gere, the available language for talking and writing about religious faith is impoverished, as “expression of spirituality that fall outside traditional norms risk being exoticized” (46). Moreover, Gere claims that because discussions of religion are normally not allowed in higher education, there is not a sophisticated or nuanced language, or theoretical discourse, to articulate spirituality (46). To Ruggles, it is more acceptable for a student to write about the details of a trauma of rape or abuse than to write a narrative of religious inspiration. As a result, narrative can help students articulate and work through a discussion with topics such as religion or politics and help writers use their language to make sense of the world.

Thus, narrative learning, as it is ubiquitous and something which people are already familiar and comfortable with, is linked to the meaning making process of one’s own identity, culture, political community, and language.

After examining the above literature, I argue that the incorporation of narrative can help students meet course objectives and help faculty reach pedagogical goals. Additionally, narratives can help with writing and rhetorical skills, as well as help students better navigate through the complex facets of identity. While the narrative and composition debate is still ongoing, it is important to have continued conversations as to how narrative can aid in reading, writing, and other purposes in FYC. However, before I do so, I turn to the topic of ideology and its relationship with narrative to glean a better understanding of how writing and the teaching of narrative functions in FYC.

Ideology and Narrative

The word ideology is often ambiguous and difficult to define as it has a wide variety of definitions in history and circulation. Cultural critic and philosopher Slavoj Žižek argues that ideology is often interpreted and critiqued as a “specter” due to the ambiguous and fleeting nature of the term (*Mapping Ideology* 5). Moreover, Terry Eagleton maintains that “nobody has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology” due to the wide range of useful readings (*Ideology* 1). It is important for my research to map a history of ideology as the contemporary understanding of ideology generally denotes to a body of ideas or beliefs that reflect the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, or culture (Chylińska; Eagleton; van Dijk). However, if ideology is defined as any set of beliefs that is motivated by social interests, then it cannot simply signify the dominant forms of thought in a society. As such, when I use the term ideology, I am referring to a medium in which social actors make sense of their world in relation to the dominant power structures.

The act of writing is always ideological. Much like ideology, narrative is charted in discourse and can be mapped across communities as well as cultures. Walter R. Fisher claims in “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm” that narrative, whether written or oral, are

features of human nature that cross time and culture, which “motivate human conduct into situational structures of ‘meaning’” (8). Fisher maintains that narrative is a “universal cultural activity,” which are embedded in the social process. Moreover, Fisher says, “narratives enable us to understand the actions of others [because] we understand our lives in terms of narratives” (8). It would not be a stretch to argue that since narrative creates and shapes public and social knowledge, that it can also help better understand ideology.

The presence of ideology in narrative has been noted since the Socratic dialogues (as I have shown through *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*) and has since become a topic of interest by scholars of narrative. David Carr argues in *Time, Narrative, and History* that narrative helps shape and constitute identity and subjectivity through a unity of experience and action (149). In *Coming to Terms*, Seymour Chatman claims that all narrative contain an “ideological rhetorical force;” that is, they implicate an ideology (198). Chatman maintains that while the purpose of a narrative is generally to solve problems, urge a thesis, or promote action, the ideological rhetorical force of a narrative positions itself within a culture’s social world (customs, values, institutions, beliefs, language, roles, etc.). Chatman believes that the ideological rhetorical force in narrative can be interpreted as a continuum as narrative functions to reaffirm or perpetuate the current hegemony (200). For example, at one end of the continuum, a heterosexual love story reaffirms the naturalness of a heteronormative society, and a “rags to riches” story endorses individualism and the benefits of hard work under a capitalist system. However, at the other end of the continuum, a gay love story can subvert the heteronormative nature of society, while a narrative of revolution exposes and undermines the reigning attitude of corporatism and capitalism. The middle of the continuum is where the ideological rhetorical force of narrative can both affirm some cultural norms (monogamy, hard work), while subverting other elements of the culture

(homophobia, sexism). It is important to note that the ideological rhetorical function of a narrative will not be the same for every reader or every member of an audience.

Unearthing ideological rhetorical forces in narrative can be difficult, however. James Jasinski argues in *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*, that audiences and readers of narratives are not necessarily passive readers and “work as *resistant* readers or audience members” (emphasis original, 398). To Jasinski, discussion of the ideological rhetorical function must acknowledge that other readings of the text are possible due to the individual’s currently held customs, ideas, and beliefs. It is important to examine narratives carefully as they can emit subversive ideological rhetorical forces, which subtly reaffirm or reconstitute central cultural norms and power structures.

James Phlean also echoes Jasinski’s idea in “Narrating the PC Controversies” that working through ideology in narratives can prove difficult. Phlean offers two questions to his readers: “(1): what causes a given observer to choose one interpretation rather than another? And (2) how can we adjudicate among different interpretations of the same phenomena?” (264). Phlean claims that since ideology plays such an important role in moving from facts to interpretations to narrative, then the evaluation of the narrative also plays a significant role. For example, if one agrees with the ideological commitments of a narrative, they may praise it, but if they disagree, they may question the same narrative. Phlean argues that authors of narratives need to adapt their language to make it both engaging and accessible for their audience due to the subjective interpretation of the narrative.

Ideology and Teaching Narrative: A Critical Approach

Not only is the act of writing always ideological, but teaching writing is also an ideological act. James Berlin argues in *Rhetoric and Reality* that the act of teaching writing is always ideological: “ideology is transmitted through language practices that are always the

center of conflict and interest . . . Ideology also . . . always includes conceptions of power” (4). Each theoretical application is an ideological choice that forms an epistemic complex of writer, reality, audience, and language, that ultimately informs and structures an understanding of composing and the writing process. Composing, then, works with and toward knowledge and meaning, as well as understanding.

Berlin believes that the New Critical methods that have historically been common in such classes are damaging to students and teachers alike, and also adds that these outdated pedagogical methods don't help prepare students for the “post-Fordist” workplace, which increasingly requires critical thinking and new types of communication. Moreover, Berlin believes that FYC should incorporate a critical and cultural approach to text, which he maintains will help student become better aware of hegemony and ideology through the use of narrative.

While Berlin was writing during the late 1980s, his ideas are still relevant today. Raymie R. McKerrow argues in “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis” that critical theory examines the dimensions of domination and freedom as they are exercised in the world (396). When applied as a method in teaching pedagogies, critical theory challenge forms of societal oppression through the use of agency and democracy. As writing is often a gateway to learning, applying critical pedagogies in the composition classroom can give students the ability to become active and informed citizens in society. However, the composition classroom is currently in an era that is being influenced by privatization, budget cuts, and austerity, as told by Tony Scott in “Subverting Crisis in the Political Economy of Composition.” As such, the field of critical pedagogies in the composition classroom stand in juxtaposition with neoliberalism. When I use the term neoliberalism I am using Shari Stenberg's definition as highlighted in *Repurposing Composition*: neoliberalism is defined as a “set of economic principles and cultural politics that

positions the free markets as a guide for all human action” (4). As neoliberalism continues to subvert composition as a perpetual crisis, it is important for composition studies to apply a critical lens so educators and students can better understand the economic system that seeks to destabilize them.

While neoliberalism may ostensibly be seen as a positive attribute for education, Tony Scott and Nancy Welch argue in their “Introduction” to *Composition in the Age of Austerity* that the impact of neoliberalism on the university continues to widen in the field of composition. Consequently, composition pedagogies still lack an understanding of how labor conditions shape the production and literacy of students’ writing (6). Scott and Welch maintain that neoliberalism operates as a theory of “good business practices” that set policies to reduce budget deficits and cut programs, especially those of the social sciences and humanities, during an economic crisis (7). As a result, composition teachers are expected to enact a “shared sacrifice,” which causes them to teach larger class sizes, deal with staff cuts, and experience wage freezes, all for the good of the university (7). These shared sacrifices ultimately impact writing students with foundational changes in curriculum and pedagogies and the value of a college degree as well as what it signifies (10).

Applying a critical lens to a classroom forms a critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogies are useful because they are not only a theoretical and political practice, but also a teaching method. Ann George argues in “Critical Pedagogies: Dream of Democracy” that critical pedagogies in the composition classroom envision a society that enacts both “the principles of freedom and social justice” (77). Students are taught about cultural practices and the power of institutions and are challenged to critique and engage these inequalities (77). Moreover, critical pedagogies disrupt

and reinvent the roles of both teachers and students in the classroom, as well as the assignments, activities, and curriculum that they engage in (78).

Critical methods are useful for composition pedagogies because they indicate the political predominance that lurks beneath the surface of everyday writing inside and outside the FYW classroom. For examples, a critical lens can unearth hegemonies that are linked through race (Martinez; Solórzano and Yosso; Young), class (Robillard; Scott; Scott and Welch), gender oppression (Stenberg; Waite), and help students better understand and make sense of power dichotomies through their writing. As this dissertation is not meant to be exhaustive of all critical pedagogies, I choose to briefly examine neoliberalism and the hegemony it has over educators and students in the composition writing class. My reasoning for choosing neoliberalism is that students who do not come from oppressed groups find learning and understanding oppression to be difficult (Kincheloe 24). Since all students are in some way impacted by neoliberalism, I argue that critical pedagogies can provide students with more agency and authorship, as well as a better understanding of political systems through the act of writing. Moreover, critical methods are useful for compositions pedagogies due to the constant marketization of writing education (Scott 29). For example, universities are becoming more reliant on writing technology such as Turnitin and Grammarly, and other forms of plagiarism and grammar checkers, that often come with hefty price tags and restrict agency for student and faculty. As a result, composition pedagogies benefit from critical methods and pedagogies to help bridge the gap between theory and enactment.

Critical Approaches to Teaching Writing

An understanding of the contemporary economic climate is necessary as it ultimately impacts universities and the writing classroom. In “Rethinking Regulation in the Age of the Literacy Machine” Mary Soliday and Jennifer Seibel Trainor argue that the conditions students

face in the writing classroom impact and develop their authorship through following rules and regulations. Through neoliberalism, literacy becomes a regulated act in the composition classroom due to “audit culture:” “accounting practices and their technologies, which have migrated across institutions, including higher education” (126). Due to the pedagogical practices that are employed in composition classrooms, the authors maintain that students’ experiences become bureaucratized in the era of neoliberal rationality. Consequently, the writing classroom is relegated into a space of economic exchange where grades are often traded for compliance and writing exercises become a formulaic act that depend on templates and rubrics (127).

Soliday and Trainor argue that writing classrooms often employ a “blueprint design:” assignment instructions and rubrics that are fixed and rigid (130). The authors maintain that these methods are a closed system that “do not tolerate error; they suppress difficulty and fail to think relationally” (130). In their study, Soliday and Trainor noticed that students that received the blueprint assignment “retreat[ed] into a student role when they described their authorship” (136). Moreover, the blueprint design tended to restrict creativity and passion of student writers, which had them feel as if they didn’t have a voice in their assignment (139). The students with more regulation tended to feel as if they lacked authorship and voice in their writing.

Soliday and Trainor also applied a “sketch design” in their study: a design that allows assignment and grading rubrics more flexibility (136). Although the sketch design did have an outline and constraints, the genre was not clear, nor did the composing process tie to assessment. Additionally, the sketch design contained fewer requirements than the blueprint, and micromanaged the students’ writing less (136). Soliday and Trainor observed that students that received sketch designs were more receptive to feedback and interacted with classmates and teachers better (142). Educators who are interested in developing critical pedagogies may

consider the sketch design as it allows for more authorship and engagement with democracy and promotes agency in student writing.

Another type of a critical writing exercise that students can produce in a composition classroom is a counterstory. As mentioned earlier, counterstories are defined as a method of telling the stories of people whose experiences are not often told, including, but not limited to, those of whom that may experience racism, sexism, and poverty, as well as other marginalized groups (Solórzano and Yosso 26). This methodology is also supported by Aja Martinez, in her article “A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory” where she argues that counterstory recognizes that the experienced and embodied knowledge of people of color is necessary to understanding racism that is “often well disguised in the rhetoric of normalized structural values and practices” (69). Counterstory can help students both understand and work through issues of not only race, but also that of gender identity, sexuality, ability, and social class in and outside of the classroom. As the institutions of power often seem normalized, counterstory can help unmask the political neutrality so students can more actively recognize them and engage in issues of democracy. As stock stories (the dominant narrative) are often canonized, they become a standard of reality. As such, counterstories can develop an author’s marginalized viewpoint and critique the viewpoint put forth by the stock story.

An additional method that can be beneficial in the composition classroom is constructing a “rhetoric of rights” (Kinloch 83). In “Revisiting the Promise of Students’ Right to Their Own Language” Valerie Kinloch argues that a rhetoric of rights involves rethinking the limitations of a Standard English, which is tied to a position of privilege and social injustice (88). Moreover, a rhetoric of rights challenges neoliberalism and the practice of marking students as disenfranchised, remedial, and unprepared (88). Kinloch claims that the concept of Standard

English is used to reinforce linguistic homogenization in the presence of multiple dialects, which neglects diversity and reinforces and champions Eurocentric values (84). However, to help combat these preconceived notions set forth by the university, Kinloch states that instructors can build a course reading list with their students to advocate for a right to their own language. Moreover, a rhetoric of rights, Kinloch maintains, allows for more democratic engagements inside of composition classrooms as the pedagogy is built off of equality, equity, and opportunity, as well as access to quality resources in emerging literacies: “We are reading, talking, discussing, sharing, and writing about issues circulating around language rights, but more importantly we are confronting our own sense of reality, which often gets ignored in classrooms” (97). As classrooms are often filled with diverse communities, a rhetoric of rights allows for inclusion of voices, rather than exclusions.

Critiques against Critical Methods

Opponents of critical methods and pedagogies often argue that instructors should be teaching their subject matter, not attempting to promote democracy, activism, and social change in the classroom. For example, Stanley Fish argues in *Is There a Text in This Class?* that college educators should not be attempting to expand on students’ civil, moral, or social characters, nor should they be engaging students with subject matter that deal with political issues or systemic issues like racism or sexism (13). Fish believes that an educator’s goal should be to produce knowledge for students in the field of one’s expertise (a compositionist should only teach composition; an engineer should only teach engineering) and going beyond the contractual agreement undermines a good pedagogy (57). Similarly, Maxine Hairston claims in “Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing” that if classes are to be taught on issues such as inequalities of race, class, and gender, as well as economic injustices, that they should be taught by faculty that have the education and experience to do so (187). Consequently, Hairston claims that educators

that put “dogma before diversity, politics before craft” are often pursuing some form of self-centered endeavor that does not pertain to the classroom (180).

Another critique of critical methods in composition pedagogies comes from compositionists that claim that educators that employ these pedagogies tend to “emphasize the ‘critical’ rather than the ‘writing’ part of critical writing pedagogies” (George 81). Moreover, Patti Lather argues in “Critical Pedagogy and its Complicities” that critical pedagogies are a “stuck” pedagogy due to legislative meanings that are often grounded in “male thought” (488). Lather suggests that critical pedagogies can grow by including more contradictory voices, counterstories, and a more completed understanding of the pedagogy (488).

Response to Opposition

Both Fish and Hairston take a pragmatic approach to teaching pedagogies. However, both Fish and Hairston also seem to make assumptions that civic engagement, social justice, and democracy should not be taught in classrooms. I question why educators would not want to prepare students to be better civic citizens. If education is meant to empower students, then it would make sense that universities provide experiences for students to feel empowered. Moreover, both Fish and Hairston believe that knowledge transfer from instructor to student should fulfill the contract of the educator in an attempt to benefit the institution and the market. Critical pedagogies, however, would question this interpretation as the benefit to the institution and the market is a response to neoliberalism, which, as highlighted above, diminishes the value and purpose of writing programs, as well as restricting authorship and the voice of students. The pedagogies that Fish and Hairston advocate for are exactly what critical pedagogies seek to challenge.

Despite the opposition against critical methods, other scholars claim that critical methods in composition pedagogies can serve as an antidote to the lack of writing instruction as well as

the lack of voice and counterstories. In *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Steven Brookfield argues that reflection is what makes teaching critical for illuminating power and uncovering hegemony (9). Moreover, in *Composing Critical Pedagogies* Amy Lee provides the reader with assignments, exercises, and goals of a critical composition course. Through writing exercises, Lee argues that composition can “make visible the cultural and political work of our reading and writing practices” (10). Moreover, Lee maintains that through these writing practice students learn to better understand their own voice, authorship, and identities (101).

Critical pedagogies in the composition classroom encourages students to use their writings to critique the world in which they live, and, when necessary, to intervene in socially responsible ways in order to change it. As the tenets of neoliberalism in higher education are engrained within western society, critical methods in composition pedagogies not only help students become better citizens, but also better writers. Since neoliberalism has penetrated deeply into the fabric of society, and as a result the education systems, a complex approach of critical resistance is needed in composition pedagogies. As such, a study of narrative in FYC that applies a critical lens is essential. The next section will examine the literature of the broad studies that have been completed of FYC in order to better show a rationale for my dissertation.

Broad Studies of FYC

What actually happens in FYC? is often a question asked by WPAs, faculty, students, and administration. But, beyond course descriptions and outcomes of FYC classes, there is not a clear understanding, or consensus, of what actually occurs in FYC. According to Emily Isaacs in *Writing at the State U* a detailed explanation of what occurs in each FYC course would require an exhaustive qualitative or observational study that would include interviews, access to instructor materials, or perhaps case studies written by participants (98). Meaning, a study of this

size is not practical and would require intensive workloads due to the sheer magnitude of FYC across the United States.

Instead, in her study, Isaacs provides a detailed empirical analysis of 106 four-year state universities, the data that is accessed is course descriptions, programs, assessment of departments, institutionalized outcomes and goals statement, as well as response to surveys. Following a grounded theory methodology, Isaacs notes that in FYC the research paper is largely “entrenched” (99). In terms of what is actually occurring in FYC in the form of content is a “focus on learning or improving one’s writing capacities or abilities [which] trumps discussion of theme or genre” (98). Moreover, Isaacs surmises that courses tend to focus on process writing as well as rhetorical instruction from an argumentative lens but avoid “a focus on skills-based instruction and the use of grammar in course descriptions” (99). Isaac also found little evidence of expressivist approaches to FYC, suggesting that “the dominance of argumentation suggests that the expressive period is, indeed, on the wane” (123).

Isaacs’ research is perhaps one of the few, and the most recent, studies that provide an empirical analysis and broad clarification of FYC at four-year public universities. Other recent major studies (the last 10 years) of the state of writing programs, instruction, and administration include Isaacs and Knight; Gladstein and Regaignon; Thaiss and Porter; and Gere. To explain the methods briefly, Isaacs and Knight sample 101 college and universities through public document review; and extract data from websites of institutions of various “top lists” from the “U.S. News & World Report.” Gladstein and Regaignon sample “writing leaders” through 109 small liberal arts colleges through an electronic survey and follow-up with e-mail and phone interviews. Thaiss and Porter sample a much larger number of participants (1,338 of 2,617) that consists of WPAs, department chairs, and writing leaders. The method details consist of

electronic surveys that are distributed on listservs and solicitation emails. Anne Gere Ruggles samples 643 college composition teachers that were members of CCCC. While the data collected and the results of these studies varied, the purpose was all the same: to attempt to better understand what is being done in FYC.

Studies of Narrative

While there are broad studies of FYC, these studies do not examine the incorporation of narrative in FYC. There are few, or none, at least that I am aware of, that examine the incorporation of narrative in FYC. While evidence exists that researchers and scholars are discussing and talking about narrative (see the WPA-L) and discussing narrative from a theoretical (Brandt; Corkey; Daniell) or pedagogical perspective (Lawrence; Lindquist; Lindquist and Halbritter; JB Scott) there is little discussion and analysis of how narrative are being used on a larger scale, and for what purpose, in FYC. Just as we need to develop a more complex pedagogy of narrative, according to Robillard, in order to do so we need to glean a better understanding of how narrative is currently being incorporated across various universities in the United States in FYC to better prepare and create this complex pedagogy. Consequently, data is needed to better understand preparation for this pedagogy. This dissertation seeks to obtain this data and to examine if narrative is still “out of vogue” or in need of constructive criticism.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I examined and contextualized the scholarly literature across rhetoric, composition, and critical theory. In this literature review, I began by providing a brief history of narrative in ancient civilizations, and then examined the purpose of FYC in a contemporary setting. I then inspected the literature of how narrative is perceived in FYC and shared the case for and against narrative in FYC. After, I gave broad benefits of narrative in FYC, and

transitioned to narrative's relationship with ideology. Wrapping up, I looked at critical approaches to narrative and ideology, and then move to critical aspects of teaching writing. I then concluded by examining broad studies of FYC and positioned my study in the literature. The next chapter describes the methods used in my project and provides a justification as to why critical grounded theory was used to help answer my research questions.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this IRB approved research study (see Appendix A) is to better understand how, and for what purpose, narrative is being used in FYC and the extent to which narrative is being used to destabilize dominant knowledge production. In an attempt to better understand the incorporation of narrative in FYC, or lack thereof, this dissertation seeks to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?
- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

In regards to research question one, after examining the literature, the perspectives on teaching narrative have come under a negative perception due to the lack of applicability to other, more analytical forms of college writing. Moreover, some compositionists oppose the use of narrative due to the lack of transfer to other writing assignments and believe the personal nature of the narrative genre is inappropriate for a composition classroom. However, other compositionists claim that the incorporation of narrative can help students meet course objectives and help faculty reach pedagogical goals. Additionally, narrative can aid with writing and rhetorical skills, as well as help students better navigate through the complex facets of identity. To better address research question two, as I highlighted through my literature review, ideology is present with storytelling and dominant modes of knowledge production, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. and are often interwoven with narrative. Moreover, the composition classroom is currently in an era that is being influenced by privatization, budget cuts, and

austerity, and impacted by neoliberalism, which may affect student and teacher agency, autonomy, and community. Understanding these issues can provide WPAs, educators, and researchers with a better understanding of narrative in FYC as well as critical theorists with a better understanding of how narrative is incorporated within academia and writing pedagogies.

To answer my research questions, I conducted a two-part study that examined how instructors of FYC are incorporating narrative in their FYC pedagogies. For Part I of the study I collected data from 108 instructors of FYC with written surveys containing open-ended questions. For Part II of the study, I followed-up with 23 instructors from the survey with more detailed qualitative interviews to gain a greater understanding of participants' experiences. I then analyzed the data separately using critical grounded theory and created codes for thematic analysis. This chapter will examine the methodology for my dissertation, including data collection and analysis, and end with a summary of the chapter.

Selecting a Sample

My strategy for answering these research questions is as follows. I decided to employ purposeful sampling to collect data for my dissertation. Purposeful sampling is intentionally choosing data that fits the parameter of the project's research questions (*Qualitative Research Methods* Tracy 134). I chose purposeful sampling as I was only interested in a particular set of participants (instructors of FYC). In order to ensure enough participants and a diverse sample, I included instructors at the following ranks: lecturer and adjunct rank (or its equivalent), professor rank (tenure-track and tenured), and graduate teaching assistants. Instructors were required to be the sole instructor of the class. Additional criteria included that the instructor needed to be currently teaching at least one section of FYC (Spring 2020) or have taught at least one section in the last academic year (Fall of 2019 or Spring 2019). My reasoning for this timeframe is that I was interested in what instructors are currently doing in FYC, and I wanted the data to be recent.

Finally, instructors needed to include either a narrative reading or narrative writing assignment in their FYC class and provide informed consent (see Appendix B). Participants agreed to informed consent by participating in the survey. Demographic information such as age, ethnicity, gender identification, position at the college, and years of teaching experience, among others, were collected in an attempt to possibly discern patterns of information related to particular demographics.

Selecting Institution Types

To gather data from a diverse set of institutions, I reached out to instructors at R1 universities (doctoral universities with very high research), RPC (the “middle-ground” within the public university institution), and private LA colleges (smaller student populations).

My reasoning for selecting these types of institutions is as follows. R1 universities represent very high research activity in the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education as of the 2020 update. These universities conduct a lot of research but also provide a lot of resources for research, which means that FYC tends to be largely taught by nontenured faculty and TAs. RPC universities represent the “middle-ground” of my research, which tend to offer a full range of undergraduate programs, and some masters programs, but few doctoral. As a result, tenured and tenured-line faculty may be teaching FYC, but, according to Isaacs’ most recent study, it is primarily being taught by adjuncts and lecturers. Like the other universities, LA colleges tend to offer an interdisciplinary curriculum, but they also tend to have a smaller population, at least in relation to other institutions. Moreover, class sizes are often small, and instructors tend to focus more on teaching than research, and tenure-line faculty may be more likely to teach FYC. Examining a wide variety of universities allowed for a wide-ranging study, which led to a comprehensive and fruitful body of data for interpretation.

All institutions were located in the midwestern region of the United States due to my experience in both the Wisconsin and Iowa university systems, as well as the connection I had with these English departments. Before I came to Iowa State, I was a lecturer in the University of Wisconsin system, and I also did my undergraduate and masters in Wisconsin. As I still have relationships with faculty in these systems, I thought I might get a higher response rate and lead to potential snowball sampling.

All 20 R1 universities in the Midwest were contacted. In order to gain a more diverse regional sample in the Midwest, 108 RPCs were sampled from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities member list (AASCU). I chose the AASCU because they describe their member list (on their website) as a learning and teaching-centered culture that has a “historic commitment to underrepresented student populations, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions’ economic progress and cultural development.” Moreover, the AASCU member list has significant breadth as well as variety in terms of institutional size, which provided a more diverse sampling. My LA sample was chosen from the *US News and World Report’s* “National Liberal’s Arts Colleges” list. I decided to incorporate the top 40 Midwest LA colleges on the *US News* list. My reasoning for choosing this list is because I am interested in how narrative is being used in FYC at LA colleges that may offer innovation and expansive areas of study to help provide some comparison with larger state universities.

Essentially the goal for this study was to further Emily Isaacs’ recently published study (2018) that is conducted in *Writing at the State U*, in which she employs a “birds-eye view” methodology that includes instruction and administration at 106 compressive universities across the United States (8). This approach is comprehensive, broad, and multi-faceted; however, it does not explain why phenomena have happened as it simply tells what has occurred. My study

provides a more granular view by conducting open-ended surveys and more in-depth interviews, which allows for both greater detail and rationale for pedagogical choices.

Data Collection

To capture rationale as well as adopt a qualitative, storytelling-like approach to data collection, I employed open-ended surveys (Part I). I chose to incorporate five questions to ensure a greater response rate. Moreover, open-ended surveys empower participants to respond in whatever way they see fit and not be constrained to preconceived constructed responses. Later, and with feedback from my committee, I decided that I wanted to gather more data, so I added an interview option for participants that wanted to speak more about narrative in FYC (Part II). The interviews allowed me to ask qualitative questions about experiences of instructors teaching narrative in FYC. I decided to use a semi-structured interview protocol to give me more flexibility to ask follow-up questions as needed, and to keep the interviews more conversational. The next section will look more closely at my recruitment strategies and the types of data I collected.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited by email. For the institutions that I wanted to survey, I went to the institution's website and looked for either the chair of the English department or the director of FYC. After receiving IRB approval for my study, I then emailed the respective person asking for them to disseminate my survey to instructors in the department that teach FYC (see Appendix C). In my email, I explained who I was, the purpose of my study, and that I was looking for instructors of FYC to complete a short survey of five questions. They were advised that the survey would take about 10-20 minutes, and an opportunity for a follow-up interview would be available, as indicated at the end of the survey. I also told recipients that all names, pronouns,

institutions, and any other identifiers would be removed from all material collected to protect anonymity.

In order to qualify for the survey, I informed recipients that participants needed to meet the following criteria:

1. The participant must be an instructor at an institution.
2. The participant must be currently teaching at least 1 section of FYC or have taught at least 1 section in the last academic year (Fall of 2019 or Spring of 2019).
3. The participant must include either a narrative reading or narrative writing assignment in your FYC class.

In total, I emailed 168 institutions. 20 of these institutions were R1, 108 were RPC, and 40 were LA colleges. In the first few weeks of April 2020, I received few responses. This was mostly likely due to rise of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). For example, some chairs / directors told me they did not want to disseminate the survey because they did not want to burden their instructors any further.

I ended up emailing institutions during the full month of April 2020 and halfway into May 2020. In total, I received 28 replies that the institution would forward my email. Even though the survey may have been emailed, that did not necessarily constitute me receiving a completed survey from the institution. I did receive, however, two completed surveys from institutions that I did not email, so I am not sure how they were contacted. They may have been forwarded from various institutions or maybe it is possible instructors worked at multiple colleges. I will now transition to Part I of my study, which focused on surveys with open-ended questions.

Part I: Surveys

The purpose of qualitative research is to better understand how participants interpret their experiences and how this experience constructs their worlds. Moreover, qualitative research

helps researchers better understand how meaning is attributed to individual experience. This point is highlighted by qualitative researcher Sarah J. Tracy in *Qualitative Research Methods* where she claims that qualitative methodologies can “provide knowledge that targets societal issues, questions, or problems and therefore services humankind” (5). Perhaps most importantly, qualitative research helps people to understand the world, their society, and its institutions.

I chose surveys as my first method of gathering data, but I wanted the surveys to be qualitative, so I created surveys with open-ended questions through Qualtrics. I chose qualitative research over quantitative as I was interested in the human experience. As Donald Treadwell argues in *Introducing Communication Research*, a qualitative approach to “human communication may provide more insights and different insights than quantitative approaches” (191). Additionally, according to Treadwell, researchers who employ a qualitative approach “are likely to be rewarded with insights, language, and unique logics and reasonings that surveys and experiments could not hope to uncover” (192). I made the surveys open-ended to allow participants more voice and autonomy in their responses. Moreover, the open-ended question approach gave participants more flexibility to answer questions, which provided me with more exploratory data for analysis. After piloting the survey on 3 graduate teaching assistants at Iowa State University, I emailed 168 institutions and received responses from 108 participants. Data was collected from April of 2020 to the end of May 2020. Overall, I was thankful and pleased with the quantity of results from survey participants as I received far more responses than I thought I would. I was hoping to receive 60 responses but concluded with 108 survey responses (see Appendix D for survey protocol).

In order to qualify for the open-ended question component of the survey, participants were required to indicate whether or not they included a narrative reading or writing assignment

in their FYC classroom. If the participant checked “yes,” then they were directed to the 5-question survey. If the participant indicated “no,” then the survey was completed. Below is the initial question that participants were given to qualify for the full survey:

In your first-year composition (FYC) class do you incorporate a narrative reading or narrative writing assignment?

In total, 54 participants fully completed the survey. Additionally, 46 participants partially completed surveys. 8 Participants answered “no” to the initial question, meaning that they completed the survey, but provided no data as they were not eligible for the scope of this study. I was able to extract data from the 54 completed surveys, and from 6 of the partially completed surveys providing me with 60 surveys for analysis.

Participants who answered “yes” to the initial question were then prompted with the following five open-ended questions to answer:

Q1: How, and for what purpose, are narratives being used in your FYC course?

Q2: What value does this assignment or reading bring to your classroom or pedagogies that other readings or assignments do not bring?

Q3: Please describe how this assignment or reading helps meet your goals or teaching outcomes or learning objectives for your classroom:

Q4: To what extent does the assignment or reading explore or destabilize dominant knowledge productions such as race, ability, gender identity, class, etc.?

Q5: Please use the textbox below to explain: What additional thoughts would you like to share that have not been encapsulated in this survey?

Q1 and Q2 focused on how instructors incorporated narrative in their pedagogies and how students reacted to the narrative assignment. Q3 is directed at course outcomes and objectives.

These three questions were primarily designed to answer RQ1. Q4 supported RQ2 by examining dominant knowledge production. Q5 provided participants with an opportunity to discuss anything not encapsulated in the survey. I did not give participants a definition of narrative as I thought it might be confusing for participants or potentially obfuscate answers. The results of the surveys will be shared in the next chapter.

At the end of the survey, participants were asked to provide optional demographic information such as age, ethnicity, gender identification, position at the college, and years of teaching experience, among other information (see Appendix E).

When participants completed the demographic section, they were asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview to provide more information for the study. If a participant selected “yes,” then they were asked to provide an email address to be contacted to set-up a subsequent interview via phone or teleconference. The survey was then completed. If participants selected “no” the survey was also completed.

Part II: Interviews

Part II of my study involved following up with participants of the survey for interviews. According to Sarah J. Tracy, “Qualitative interviews provide opportunities for mutual discovery, understand, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive, and oftentimes energizing” (*Qualitative Research Methods* 132). Moreover, qualitative interviews help highlight subjectively lived experiences and viewpoints from the participants’ perspective (132). David Tripp adds to this idea of shared meaning, explaining that meaning is often created between participants rather than being help in the minds of the interviewer or interviewee and swapped back and forth (“Co-Authorship and Negotiation”). As a result, interviews are useful not only to explore research questions and to find information, but also work to cocreate a shared experience and meaning.

The interview questions were designed to be semi-structured. This semi-structured format permitted for more descriptive answers and allowed for more conversational responses.

According to Tracy, semi-structured questions provide researchers with more flexibility, but still allow for a list of questions to be repeated in the same order and in the same wording (139).

Moreover, semi-structured interviews questions allow participants the opportunity to speak to a larger variety of topics that can be elaborated on further (Tracy 139). As a result, semi-structured interview questions can lead researchers to find data they did not anticipate, potentially increasing the rigor of their study.

The interview protocol (see Appendix F) consisted of the following questions:

Q1: How would you define narrative?

Q2: You indicated that you include a narrative reading or a narrative writing assignment?

Can we talk more about those?

If reading, which readings?

How are you using these readings in your classroom?

Why did you choose these particular readings over other readings?

If writing assignment, can you briefly describe the assignment?

Do students have a right to their own language in this assignment?

What surprised you the most about your students' writing with this assignment?

Would you change anything for future assignments?

Q3. Is there anything else you would like to add about the use of narrative in FYC?

Q4: Any last questions or comments for me?

31 participants showed interest in participating in the follow up interview and were subsequently emailed. Of the 31 interested, 23 were interviewed for this project. 20 interviews were completed over Zoom, and 3 interviews were completed by telephone. 11 agreed to interview but did not commit to the interview. The audio from each interview was recorded with the participant's permission. Participants were also advised that all identifying information would be replaced with pseudonyms. Length of interviews ranged from 14 minutes to 50 minutes, with an average interview time of 24 minutes. There were 8.3 hours of data and 143 pages of transcripts from the interviews. All recordings and transcripts were stored in a secure location and were deleted at the completion of the study.

As Barney Glaser and Ansley Strauss note in *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, the majority of qualitative studies should follow the concept of saturation until the collection of data no longer shines light on the issue under investigation. The amount of data I collected helped me reach theoretical saturation.

Data Analysis and Coding

I had far more than I initially anticipated. In order to analyze qualitative data effectively, Tracy recommends that researchers submerge themselves in the entire breadth of the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts. Moreover, Tracy emphasizes the importance of working with others: "Talking to others about your data aids in sensemaking and in considering a variety of interpretations. In all immersion activities, the goal is to absorb and marinate in the data, jotting down reflections and hunches, but reserving judgement" (189). In order to gain multiple perspectives, and to achieve credibility through inter-code reliability with data analysis, I worked with one graduate student coder and two undergraduate student coders who all had experience with research methodologies. To Tracy, inter-coder reliability is "making use of multiple data points and researcher points of view, even when they do not converge, is still a practice toward

qualitative credibility” (236). Inter-coder reliability is important because it allows a team of researchers to ensure they are coding and classifying data in a similar way (*Qualitative Research Methods* 237). To reach inter-coder reliability, student coders worked independently coding, and then we met multiple times, virtually, over the Summer of 2020 to work collaboratively, debrief, and to revise our codes are necessary. All in all, student coders worked about 35 hours each to help with data analysis. Student coders were compensated for their involvement in this dissertation.

Coding refers to labeling and systematizing data in order to analyze it (Tracy 186). Moreover, coding is the active process of identifying data as belonging to, or representing, some type of phenomenon. Tracy describes this phenomenon as: “a concept, belief, action, theme, cultural practice, or relationship” (189). Tracy further explains coding research in three different phases. The first is “open coding,” which is the expected themes that may arise from the data (189). Next, is “first-level codes,” which is the themes that are present in the data (189). Lastly, “constant comparative methods,” which is modifying code definitions to fit in new data (190). The coding cycle of constant comparative methods is a circular, iterative, and reflective process.

For this study, I began with the idea of open coding, but I primarily focused on what was presented in the data and created first-level codes from the transcripts. When generating codes, I focused on concepts I thought instructors of FYC might find the most relevant that were related to my research questions. My team and I constantly reflected on codes, and adapted, based on meetings and the findings of new codes throughout the process. As a result, we also employed constant comparative methods due to the circular, iterative, and reflective process of coding.

From the codes, themes were developed (Chapter 4 will discuss the themes of the study). The themes were paired with codes through keywords and phrases. The codes were then grouped

into concepts and defined for consistency. The code tables below show the codes paired with their respective definition.

The surveys were coded first, as we had access to them first, and independently of the interviews. After completion of coding the surveys, we then coded the interviews. While the coding was similar, there were some differences due the data. The table below shows the codes used for both the surveys and the interviews, and a brief description of how the code was defined.

Table 1. Survey Codes

Code	Definition
Community	Reference to community building
Identity	Reference to class, gender, ability, race, etc.
Literacy	Reference to student literacy or a literacy narrative
Reflection	Reference to student reflection
Rhetorical	Reference to rhetorical skills
Starting Point	Reference to narrative as a starting point or going beyond narrative or narrative scaffolding
Student	Reference to student experience
Support	Reference to support or evidence
Writing	Reference to writing skills or strategies

Table 2. Interview Codes

Code	Definition
Agency	Reference to student agency
Community	Reference to community building
Course Objectives	Reference to course or learning objectives
Critical Thinking	Reference to critical thinking skills
Identity	Reference to class, gender, ability, race, etc.
Pedagogical Goals	Reference to pedagogical goals or instructor teaching outcomes
Rhetoric	Reference to rhetorical skills
Starting Point	Reference to narrative as a starting point or going beyond narrative or narrative scaffolding
Student	Reference to the student experience
Writing	Reference to writing skills

Analyzing Data Further: Grounded Theory

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their text *The Discover of Grounded Theory* explain how a grounded theory approach moves between data collection and analysis to develop theories that are derived from data provided by participants. A grounded theory approach compels interviewers to question their own assumptions and to try to obviate them. Moreover, in their “Introduction” to *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin argue that qualitative evaluation draws on critical and creative thinking and enables a sort of interplay between researchers and the data (8). Grounded theory, then, can be summed up as a realistic approach to data analysis that develops an overriding story or set of themes that are “grounded” in the group of data. Grounded theory has been utilized across many disciplines and over the years and has developed theories that operate under grounded theory methodologies, such as critical grounded theory, which will be expanded on in the next session.

Analyzing Data Further: Critical Grounded Theory

Critical theory is not a methodology in the traditional sense of formula or prescription (McKerrow 404). This is because critical methods do not necessarily stipulate a set of research protocols or reading strategies; rather, the critical method offers a perspective that helps shape or guides the critic's interaction with the world (Treadwell 245). Sarah J. Tracy states in *Qualitative Research Methods* that critical research brings power relations to conscious awareness, which "provides researchers with space for questioning and transformation" (42). Moreover, to Tracy, critical approaches in research have an ethical obligation to help or emancipate those that find themselves in situations that are immoral, violent, unfair, or unethical (42). For example, many critical researchers choose to investigate topics of hegemony and ideology. As such, critical methods not only go about describing and identifying the injustice, but also actively works toward changing them (43).

Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren also argue about the lack of fixed characteristic of critical methods, which is a potential drawback of the critical grounded theory approach due to the lack of a standard methodology. Because of the many critical theories that have appeared, the critical tradition is always changing and evolving, and there is often much room for disagreement between theorists and researchers (287). As critical theory is concerned with issues of power and social justice, Kincheloe and McLaren state that critical research can be best understood in the context of the empowerment of individuals in order to confront the injustice in a given society (300). Moreover, they claim that traditional researchers tend to only act as neutral observers who set their task at the "description, interpretation, or reanimation of a slice of reality" (301). On the other hand, critical researchers frequently regard their research as the first step in their studies toward a political oriented process to address injustices.

As such, critical methods can help destabilize the knowledge production that mainstream research practices generally (though often unknowingly) implicate in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (Kincheloe and McLaren 291). Critical grounded theory allowed me to apply inductive reasoning to analyze the data and establish codes and extract themes to better understand the data from a critical lens.

Analyzing Data Further: Thematic Analysis

Qualitative interviews are most often analyzed based on thematic analysis, or themes that are found throughout the data. When applying critical grounded theory, themes are not only grounded in the dataset, but data collection and analysis often occur simultaneously, which allows for the themes to become more fluid throughout the duration of the project. The critical approach allows for a better understanding of recurring problems and social interactions that are ultimately linked to power, inequality, or other critical concerns, leading to a more focused investigation (“Critical Grounded Theory” Hadley 581). Initial codes are created based on the researcher’s interpretation of what may be present in the data, and these codes become more saturated and narrowed throughout the coding process. Eventually, the codes became more concrete, and themes began to better manifest from the data. By analyzing the themes in relation to the literature, the themes become more relevant for the study. Moreover, applying a theoretical lens to interpret the themes allows for a new interpretation of the data. The results of the data can be found in the next chapter, which is the results of the data. The table below shows the critical codes used for both the surveys and the interviews, and a brief description of how the code was defined.

Table 3. Critical Codes

Code	Definition
Autonomy	Reference to student or instructor autonomy
Destabilization	Reference to destabilizing dominant knowledge production
Ideology	Reference to ideology
Lack of Autonomy	Reference to student or instructor lack of autonomy
Standardization	Reference to standardization
Struggle	Reference to student or instructor struggle
Textbook	Reference to concern with textbook

Summary of Chapter

In the beginning of this chapter, I reintroduced my main research questions regarding the use of the narrative in FYC and whether or not it is being used to destabilize dominant knowledge production:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?
- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

In Chapter 3, I outlined the methodology that I employed to answer these questions, including theories and methods, and how I selected my sample of participants and institution types. I then explained how I collected data and recruited participants. In Part I, I showed my open-ended survey, and in Part II, I introduced my interview protocol. I then explained how I analyzed the data and coding process, and how I employed grounded theory, critical grounded theory, and thematic analysis of the data set. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will provide the results of the dissertation project.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

In this chapter I present the results of the open-ended surveys and interviews from participants. I first provide an overview from the surveys and then more detailed results from the interviews. Through these results, I work toward answering the research questions presented in Chapter 1:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?
- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

I begin this chapter by presenting the results of the surveys and providing observations of the data. I then move to the results of interviews with an examination of the data provided by participants. Throughout both sections I provide analysis of the data that I present, but more detailed analysis will be provided in Chapter 5.

Part I: Surveys

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, I conduct surveys with open-ended questions through Qualtrics. The open-ended question approach gives participants more flexibility to answer questions, which provides me with more exploratory data for analysis. I emailed 168 institutions and received responses from 108 participants. Overall, I am pleased with the quantity of results from survey participants.

In order to qualify for the open-ended question component of the survey, participants were required to indicate whether or not they include a narrative reading or writing assignment in their FYC classroom. If the participant checked “yes,” then they were directed to the five-question survey. If the participant indicated “no,” then the survey was completed. Below is the initial question that participants were given to qualify for the survey:

In your first-year composition (FYC) class do you incorporate a narrative reading or narrative writing assignment?

In total, 54 participants fully completed the survey. Additionally, 46 participants partially completed surveys. Finally, 8 Participants answered “no” to the initial question, meaning that they completed the survey, but provided no data as they were not eligible for the scope of this study. I was able to extract data from the 54 completed surveys, and from 6 of the partially completed surveys providing me with 60 surveys for analysis.

Participants who answered “yes” to the initial question were then prompted with the following five open-ended questions to answer:

Q1: How, and for what purpose, are narratives being used in your FYC course?

Q2: What value does this assignment or reading bring to your classroom or pedagogies that other readings or assignments do not bring?

Q3: Please describe how this assignment or reading helps meet your goals or teaching outcomes or learning objectives for your classroom:

Q4: To what extent does the assignment or reading explore or destabilize dominant knowledge productions such as race, ability, gender identity, class, etc.?

Q5: Please use the textbox below to explain: What additional thoughts would you like to share that have not been encapsulated in this survey?

I will now share the results of each question individually. There are no names or institutions tied to participants to protect participant identity and they/them pronouns is used to protect gender identity.

Q1: How, and for what purpose, are narratives being used in your FYC course?

The major themes that emerge from Q1 include literacy, writing strategies, and reflection. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in

analysis, how many references³ were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.⁴

Table 4. Question 1 Themes

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Literacy	14	Evaluation of literacy; literacy experiences; literacy narrative; role of literacy.
Writing Strategies	6	Analysis and discussion of writing strategies; incorporating creative elements; narrative is used to teach writing strategies; practice writing skills.
Reflection	5	Metacognition; process of evaluation; reflection on identity; reflect on own writing; self-reflection.
Comfort or Accessibility	4	Accessible support; ease into academic writing; narrative is a place of comfort; narrative is more comfortable than academic writing.
Critical or Deeper Thinking or Perspective	4	different opinions; meaning making practices; reflection leads to analysis; thinking critically.
Support or Evidence	4	Expert on topic; support a claim with a story or personal experience.

Literacy

The concept of literacy is the most prominent theme referenced by participants for Q1.

For these participants, narrative serves as a way for students to examine how literacy has shaped their lives and how it may differ from the literacies of others and in various rhetorical situations.

³ A reference indicates that a participant made a reference toward the respective theme. The reference does not indicate the frequency a participant made to the respective theme.

⁴ Note that each table in this chapter only includes a summary of the themes that were the most salient.

Participants indicate that the examination of literacy in FYC is a way for students to “go beyond the limits of the 5-paragraph essay” and to have students begin thinking about discourse and rhetoric. For one participant, critically examining literacy helps students explore how literacies differ among individuals, and how literacy correlates with education and learning.

Overwhelmingly, participants that mention the theme of literacy often do so in relation to a literacy narrative. A participant states, “[a literacy narrative] lets [students] engage in metacognition as they think back on their writing and reading experiences.” Moreover, another participant claims that the literacy narrative asks students to consider some literacy that “they have mastered or are still mastering,” while another instructor asks their students to consider their current and future literacy needs. The data suggests that instructors pair narrative with literacy due to literacy’s complementary nature to the narrative genre.

Most instructors that reference a literacy narrative explain that it is the first assignment in the course. One participant explains that they begin the semester with a literacy narrative because it is a familiar genre to students: “[the literacy narrative] presents [literacy] in a somewhat new way while introducing [students] to college writing.” Another teacher says that starting the course with a literacy narrative helps students “place themselves in communication communities.” Although one participant includes the literacy narrative in a final portfolio, the majority of instructors surveyed begin the course with the assignment. Participants believe that a literacy narrative assigned at the beginning of the semester is helpful for introducing students to college writing and acts as a springboard to other forms of academic discourse as the literacy narrative draws on students’ own personal experience.

Writing Strategies

The second most referenced theme for Q1 is writing strategies. As one of the outcomes of FYC is to teach students how to be good writers and to support claims, it makes sense that

instructors use narrative to incorporate strategies to help students with their writing. A participant asserts that narrative is helpful for teaching writing strategies as students can examine micro-strategies of writing: “We examine the way an author opened, consider the rhetorical situation . . . [and] how dialogue, setting, [and] character description are used.” Another instructor claims that the rhetoric of narratives is helpful for writers to better understand Aristotelian appeals, tone, and choice of details. Most participants that reference the theme of writing strategies believe that narrative writing functions as an exemplar of style and genre.

In addition to teaching style, a participant claims that narrative writing is overtly creative. This instructor states that the creative aspect of narrative provides student with more personal writing: “The ‘creative’ aspect gives [students] a longer leash that allows them to play around with writing and incorporate elements – ideas, impressions, memories – that are of interest and importance to them personally.” To this participant, incorporating narrative assignments into FYC pedagogies ideally shows students that writing can be fun instead of arduous, which can make academic writing less intimidating.

Reflection

Reflection is the third most referenced theme from Q1 and seems to be reoccurring throughout the surveys. Participants use the term reflection broadly, ranging from metacognition, to self-reflection, and reflection as a process of evaluation. Most participants that mention the theme of reflection agree that narrative helps aid students with reflection, as narrative allows students to think back on their reading and writing experiences. One participant mentions that narrative is “inherently reflective” as it structures reflective processes and “channel[s] them onto the page.”

According to another instructor, narrative can also aid in students better establishing their ethos through the reflection process. This participant avers that the examination of narrative

strategies allows students to develop their own writing strategies through reflection. Moreover, students increase their ethos through narrative by using their experiences as evidence. Narrative, then, serves as a purpose for students to interpret and modify their experiences “based on their reflections and the feedback from readers.”

Summary

Overall, participants indicate that narrative is predominantly used to examine the role of literacy, enhance writing strategies, and engage students in reflection. Themes that are referenced less by participants include narrative aiding in student comfort and accessibility, the relationship between narrative and critical thinking skills, and narrative being used to support claims with evidence.

Q2: What value does this assignment or reading bring to your classroom or pedagogies that other readings or assignments do not bring?

The major themes that emerged from Q2 include writing and rhetorical skills, student interest or engagement, ideologies of language, and building trust or community. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 5. Question 2 Themes

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Writing and Rhetorical Skills	11	Creative writing; introduction to writing ability; research skills; skills learning; thinking rhetorically; writing a narrative is a vital skill.
Student Interest or Engagement	8	Familiar with genre; interest in stories; narratives are engaging; narrative provides interest; narrative writing is easier.
Ideologies of Language	7	Experience of self; knowledge production; language shapes society; marginalized identities; narrative as social construction; social justice and diversity
Building Trust or Community	7	Confidence; fostering a sense of community; narrative comforts students; narrative creates trust between students and educator; narrative relaxes students.
The Personal	6	Easy/fun way to start course; getting to know students better; intersection between personal and public; personal opinion; personal reflection.
Reflection	6	Metacognition; reflection on communication modes, reflection on past experiences.

Writing and Rhetorical Skills

The theme that occurs the most in Q2 is the value that narrative has with writing and rhetorical skills.⁵ This theme correlates with Q1 where participants indicate that narrative is helpful for providing students with writing strategies. One participant says that being able to construct a narrative is “a vital skill in all areas of life” as “humans are narratively-oriented

⁵ I pair writing skills with rhetorical skills as participants overwhelmingly married them together with their response to Q2.

creatures.” Other instructors find the value of narrative to have students build research, rhetorical, and writing skills through a variety of texts.

Similar to writing skills in Q1, participants also return to the theme of creative writing. One participant claims: “I am deeply bothered by the dull prose students are trained to turn out as part of doing well in high school.” This participant believes that the value of narrative in FYC aids in opening students to a natural form of human communication: “the ability to describe and tell a story using a rich language.” Another instructor echoes this idea, stating that stories are meaningful for students as they give students freedom for creativity, while teaching them the important rhetorical concepts such as dialogue and tone.

Much like the section of literacy referenced in the results of Q1, participants find that a narrative assignment at the beginning of the semester is helpful for students to improve their writing skills. One participant includes a narrative writing assignment in the beginning of the semester to provide them with “an introduction to [student’s] writing abilities.” According to this participant, they can then “tailor the rest of the semester to helping [students] improve their writing skills.” Moreover, another instructor adds that a narrative as the first assignment in FYC works more effectively than any other assignment as it “encourage[s] students to shed many of the rigid rules they’ve learned about academic writing and to start thinking more rhetorically about how to build an effective message.”

Student Interest or Engagement

Student interest or student engagement is the next theme that participants reference in the survey. Instructors that reference this theme agree that narrative reading and writing are engaging and brings interests to students. For example, one participant says that narrative “works to get students excited about the class because they realize they have creative license with their writing,” while another instructor indicates the enthusiasm from narrative “propels [students] to

the next exercise.” This idea of narrative propelling students to the next exercise harkens back to the idea of narrative as a springboard to other forms of academic writing assignments.

Not only is narrative engaging to students, but participants often claim that talking and writing about personal experiences are also interesting to students. One participant claims that students are engaged “when writing about personal experiences,” while another instructor speaks similarly to this idea, stating, “students are more interested in composing about themselves and stories.” Indeed, this engagement also stems from a “familiar form,” according to one instructor, while another instructor asserts that due to the familiarity of narrative that students find narrative a little easier, and consequently more enjoyable.

Ideologies of Language

Another reoccurring theme that instructors of FYC find valuable in their pedagogies is the critical concept of ideologies of language. Language ideologies are linked to the broader aspects of social and cultural systems, which are influenced by a communicator’s beliefs. For example, a student may criticize another student for speaking AAVE due to the relationship with power and championing of standardized English in college. Instructors in the survey indicate that narrative is a good tool to help students better navigate these language ideologies and how students can better focus on language and its relationship to culture and social inequalities. To better elucidate this concept, a participant claims that the value of narrative in their classroom is that narrative “serves all majors to learn that language and text shapes [sic] what certain groups of people can or cannot do in a given society.” Interestingly enough, another participant speaks similarly to the idea of how narrative helps student better understand marginalized identities by “persuad[ing] students to reexamine their beliefs in a way an analytic essay does not.”

Instructors also spoke to the value of the practices of language ideologies and its relationship to justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity through their FYC classrooms because of

narrative. One instructor wants students to “consider what it means for [students] to use writing as the practice of interrogating their positionality, who they are, who they will become, and who they want to be.” Comparably, another instructor speaks to the importance narrative as a social construction and knowledge production and that stories can often “reify and challenge structures that are oppressive.” This participant believes that values of language ideologies in FYC are important for students in any educational setting or professional field to understand through not only their own stories, but the stories of others.

Building Trust Or Community

In addition to the theme of ideologies of language, building trust or community through narrative is also referenced by 7 participants. One participant claims that narrative “opens the door to trust [in their] classroom” as the assignment is personal and ungraded. The idea of building trust in the classroom is important for another instructor as narrative not only gives students greater confidence through their writing by showing them that their experiences matter, but also creates a vulnerability. Another participant claims that when students feel vulnerable sharing their personal stories in the classroom that the assignment “fosters an early sense of community.” Narrative, to this participant, lets student think about audience in an “immediate way” as they share their stories with each other for the “sake of classroom community.”

Summary

To sum up, participants indicate the value of narrative in FYC is shown through the teaching of writing and rhetorical skills, student interest or engagement, better understanding the ideologies of language, and building trust or community in the classroom. Themes that are referenced less by participants include helping students better understand the personal and the concept of reflection.

Q3: Please describe how this assignment or reading helps meet your goals or teaching outcomes or learning objectives for your classroom:

The major themes that emerged from Q3 include rhetorical skills, writing skills, and a variety of perspectives and demographics. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 6. Question 3 Themes

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Rhetorical Skills	15	Audience; genre; purpose; rhetorical situation; rhetorical tools.
Writing Skills	11	Crafting an argument; descriptive language; formatting conventions; make claims; revision.
Variety of Perspectives and Demographics	7	Diversity; marginalized perspectives; new forms of narrative; write in different ways.
Reflection	5	Critical reflection; metacognition.
Research Skills and Using Sources	5	Experience as evidence; research methods; support a claim; understanding evidence.
Student Growth	4	Confidence in writing; encouragement; more productive writing; professional growth.

Rhetorical Skills

Much like Q1 and Q2, rhetorical skills remain a prominent theme throughout the survey. However, when linked with narrative meeting goals, teaching outcomes, or learning objectives in

the FYC classroom, the rhetorical skills that participants mention seem to differ. For example, multiple participants incorporate narrative to teach students about the rhetorical situation to better meet classroom goals or learning objectives. One participant claims that narrative “helps teach students to tailor writing to [the] rhetorical situation,” while another instructor states similarly that one of the shared outcomes for FYC is for students to be able to “write effectively for various rhetorical situations.”

Perhaps in addition to the rhetorical situation, participants have an interest in narrative and how it can better help students understand audience. A participant states that one of their learning objectives is that “writers should anticipate the reader” and they believe that narrative helps reach this objective due to “narrative’s call and response with the reader.” Another teacher says that narrative helps develop “audience awareness,” while another participant emphasizes that narrative helps students “to get a sense of audience” by getting “an opportunity to understand how their position as write affects a reader.”

Another rhetorical skill that participants remark frequently is how narrative help students better understand the concept of genre. For one instructor, their learning outcomes involve the concept of genre, and a narrative is a “new genre to many students this gives them a chance to think of audience, purpose, genre, in a fresh way.” For another teacher, the narrative assignment helps students better understand genre conventions through the “fluctuating form” of narrative.

Writing Skills

Correspondingly to rhetorical skills, participants indicate that writing skills are a chief goal, teaching outcome, or learning objective for their classroom. Participants claim that narrative aids in helping students to continue to develop their writing skills more thoughtfully and critically. Additionally, a participant says that narrative gives students “a chance to practice detailed, organized, [and] compelling writing.” Other instructors mention the “writerly voices”

that narrative evokes, and the “sophisticated language” that comes from the “authorial choices” of students.

For many participants, the writing process and teaching effective written communication is a fundamental objective in FYC. One participant claims that narrative practices all of the stages of the writing process: “prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing” and also provides “specific details and vivid, descriptive language to engage a reader.” Other instructors speak to how narrative helps students generate, select, and focus on a clear writing topic while engaging in the writing process.

Additional participants claim that narrative is helpful for students to learn how to make claims in their writing, which, one instructor says, is “surprisingly difficult for many of them.” This participant believes that narrative critically engages students effectively to make strong claims in their essay through personal experience: “‘My town lacks diversity because...’ or ‘My high school insisted on dress codes that were humiliating to the girls.’” Not only is narrative being used to support claims for this instructor, but also providing the students opportunities to think more critically about their claims.

Variety of Perspectives and Demographics

Much like the ideologies of language in Q2, instructors reference how narrative provides a variety of perspectives and demographics, which helps meet their goals or teaching outcomes or learning objectives for their classroom. One instructor claims that they use narrative to expose students to a variety of perspectives, especially including those with marginalized perspectives. Another participant speaks similarly to this claim, echoing: “Narrative has become the most integral tool in course design because of how it taps into student’s natural fluenc(ies) across a range of demographics (e.g., age, ability, country of origin).” To this participant, a variety of

perspectives shows students that authors can write in many different ways and that narrative writing is “just as legitimate as more traditional forms of research writing.”

The idea of diversity as a goal or outcome of the FYC classroom also relates to the idea of “multiple perspectives,” as indicated by some participants. A participant writes that narrative “helps students grasp a richer notion of ‘multiple perspectives’ and helps them break out of the rigid idea that all arguments can be reduced to a ‘pro’ and ‘con’ side.” Moreover, another instructor claims that narrative creates a “shared body of knowledge for the class to use to debate and deepen ideas” that provides diversity and the experience of others.

Summary

Overall, participants indicate that narrative helps meet the goals or teaching outcomes or learning objects for FYC through rhetorical skills, writing skills, and by providing a variety of perspectives and demographics. Themes that are referenced less by participants include reflection, research skills and using sources, and student growth.

Q4: To what extent does the assignment or reading explore or destabilize dominant knowledge productions such as race, ability, gender identity, class, etc.?

The major themes that emerged from Q4 include: race or ethnicity or national origin, personal experience or expression, and a wide spectrum of dominant knowledge production.⁶ Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

⁶ Some participants focused on many different modes of production, so I ended up making a “wide spectrum of dominant knowledge production” code for participants who referenced a gamut of dominant modes of knowledge production.

Table 7. Question 4 Themes

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Race or Ethnicity or National Origin	15	Authors of color; biracial identities; cultural stereotyping; place of origin; racial identity; white supremacy.
Personal Experience or Expression	13	A shaping experience; exploration of own experiences; personal stories; personal topic; reflection of one's self.
Wide Spectrum of Dominant Knowledge Production	11	Brief mention of ability, class, gender identity, race, sexuality, etc.
Gender	10	Gender nonconforming; nonbinary; transgender; women.
Language or Literacy	9	Different types of literacies; discourse community; disempowering language; language superiority; linguistic discrimination.
Identity	7	Identity and writing; nondominant identities; othering; unique identities.
Instructor Does Not Employ These Concepts	3	Instructor states that they do not employ concepts of destabilizing dominant knowledge production.

Race or Ethnicity or National Origin

Destabilizing the dominant mode of race, ethnicity, or national origin is the most prominent theme that participants reference in relation to Q4. Participants indicate that they often try to include authors of color in their reading lists to use as models of narrative writing. One instructor claims that they include authors of color to “have a critical conversation about how the status quo isn’t necessarily the best.” Another participant uses narratives in their classroom to

destabilize the idea of “mixed-race fetishism and cultural stereotyping,” while another instructor chooses readings and assignments that have some aspect of non-dominant identities, such as national origin.

Other mentions of destabilizing dominant modes of production such as race, ethnicity, or national origin relate to how narrative shapes others form of discourse. One particular participant says that they use the theme of science in their FYC pedagogies to help students better understand how science as a dominant mode of production has been unfair to people of color. For example, this participant has students examine the Tuskegee Experiment to have students better think about quality, accuracy, and content of narratives and the experiences of others. Another instructor claims that their “whole class is a sneaky anti-why/male/affluent supremacy party” to help students better work through social constructions and to “investigate how dominant ideas [. . .] have been shaped by texts in the US.”

While most participants that reference race, ethnicity, or national origin provide the readings and assignments to students, other instructors claim that students write about their own identities with race, ethnicity, or national origin in their own narratives. For example, an instructor claims that they assign a narrative that asks students to “write about a time where they felt like they had no voice or they experienced a moment of adversity,” and that students will often write about race. Another participant speaks similarly to this idea and says that they have had students “who wrote memoirs about navigating a biracial Japanese-American identity.”

Personal Experience or Expression

Personal experience or expression is the second most discussed theme for Q4. While not necessarily a dominant mode of production, participants do note that personal experience or expression is dictated by student choice, which can explore a dominant mode of production. For example, an instructor states that “The extent to which this assignment explores or destabilizes a

dominant knowledge product depends on the student and how they respond to the assignment.”

Another instructor speaks similarly to this comment, noting that “The narrative allows students to pursue a personal topic or experience that has impacted their lives in some way [. . .] thus hopefully challenging, or at least reconsidering that knowledge.”

Most instructors in this category share that the stories that students tell in their pieces range widely from one another, while others say that students focus more on engaging their peers. One participant mentions how a student confronted “toxic masculinity” through a personal experience, despite the assignment not asking for reflection on gender or class. While some instructors desire their student to explore topics of dominant knowledge, some claim that students tend to “reflect more on themselves” and “focus on trying to make themselves understood.”

Wide Spectrum of Knowledge Production

As mentioned earlier, a wide spectrum of knowledge production is coded from participants who reference a gamut of dominant knowledge production. For example, a participant states that they “[do] not shy away from contemporary concerns regarding race, representation, gender, and cultural dynamics.” This participant claims that many students write about “heavy, self-forming ideas” such as femininity in bodybuilding, embracing Atheism, and traumatic experiences. While this instructor says that students can write about lighthearted topics, many share more personal experiences, which suggests to the instructor that the students are “claim[ing] ownership over their narratives” and subverting “the traditional teacher-center classroom experience.”

Other instructors claim that they use narrative readings to explore issues such as race, class, and gender to explore other identities and to consider different rhetorical context. A participant writes that they “wish” that students leave their first-year writing class with

destabilized notions of social difference, but they have seen “some students reflect more on themselves, and a few describe more social awareness of racial, gender, sexual, and socioeconomic differences” when they leave the classroom.

Instructor Does Not Employ These Concepts

A less talked about theme, but one that shows disparate data, is the code of instructors not employing concepts of destabilizing dominant knowledge production in their FYC pedagogies. An instructor bluntly states: “I don’t waste my time on these concepts.” Another participant claims they teach at a health science college, so narrative is not related to gender or class, but, instead to health care. Additionally, an instructor says that they think “we can over-use issues of race or class in a classroom, especially when a privileged white person is the instructor.” The instructor continues: “I teach at a CC [community college] with a pretty diverse group of students—they know these race and class issues already. The generational issue does seem to engage them.”

Summary

To conclude, participants indicate that narrative helps destabilize dominant modes of knowledge production mainly through the themes of race, ethnicity, or national origin, personal experience or expression, and a wide spectrum of dominant knowledge production. Additionally, this section has also looked at the theme of instructors choosing not to incorporate concepts of dominant knowledge production. Themes that are referenced less by participants include exploring gender, language or literacy, and identity. Participants also made claims that they can do a better job of exploring ability in the classroom.

Q5: Please use the textbox below to explain: What additional thoughts would you like to share that have not been encapsulated in this survey?

Q5 provides participants with the opportunity to add in additional comments that they have regarding narrative that they may not have included otherwise. The major themes that emerged from Q5 include additional benefits, diversity or differences, meaning making or knowledge building, and resistance or difficulties. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 8. Question 5 Themes

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Additional Benefits	10	Creative writing; engaged citizens; enjoyment; generating ideas; positive classroom culture.
Diversity or Differences	4	Intersectional identity; region or location; understanding culture.
Meaning Making or Knowledge Building	4	Creating voice; knowledge transfer; sense making.
Resistance or Difficulties	4	Different from other academic writing; resistance encountered with narrative; resistance from department.
Value or Experience	3	Personal experience as evidence; stories related to own life; value of the personal.
Definition	2	Related to the definition of narrative.

Additional Benefits

The theme of additional benefits may relate to previous questions such as Q1 or Q2, but instructors frequently indicate the additional benefits of narrative in FYC or their pedagogies in Q5. One instructor claims that narrative writing is imperative to positive classroom culture: “It’s a place for us (as instructors) to learn more about our students and their struggles and if they are willing to share their stories it has the ability to break down walls and barriers.” Another instructor writes similarly about the idea of a positive classroom culture as “Students seem to enjoy narratives more than other types of reading.” This instructor claims that giving students something to enjoy at the beginning of the course can give students “a ‘way in’” to the curriculum.

Another instructor speaks to the multi-faceted benefits of narratives due to the ubiquity of narrative: “Narratives are everything, and the sooner we can help students learn to identify narrative content in news, political speeches, or even texts that purport to be merely informative, they can become more analytical writers, have greater information literacy, and be more active, engage, and literature citizens.” Indeed, to this instructor, narrative serves an important and multifunctional purpose in FYC.

Diversity or Differences

Other instructors use Q5 to examine narrative and its relationship to diversity or differences within their communities. One instructor writes that they teach at a university in a small town, where students come from rural areas and are not visually diverse, but intersectional identity provides a “richness of different,” which increases awareness in working across a wide range of differences. Likewise, another instructor claims that their region is filled with racial segregated towns that still practice divisions that are race/gender/class based. This instructor claims: “It might be useful to ask students to locate themselves when we ask them to narrative

themselves.” Another participant says their students at their institution live in a “confirmation bubble” and writing about their experience for an audience “that is NOT from their culture is a good first step toward understanding the perspective of others.”

Meaning Making or Knowledge Building

Participants also indicate in Q5 that narrative aids in providing students with “meaning making” or knowledge building. For example, a participant writes that narrative writing helps students grasp “very complex” ideas, which helps build academic knowledge. Another instructor argues that narrative enables students to “make meaning” from their own lives which allows for students to transfer that “writing knowledge” through their educational career. Additionally, an instructor says that narrative helps transfer voice to other writing assignments as “narrative helps students find their voice.” However, one participant claims that students tend to struggle with knowledge transfer between assignments but tend to struggle less with the narrative assignment.

Resistance or Difficulties

Instructors also use Q5 to speak to how narrative is met with resistance by students or departments. For example, a participant writes regarding the department’s resistance to narrative: “While narrative has been a useful tool in my own pedagogical practice, I still find myself struggling against a department where narratives are seen as inferior to other forms, due to their relatively Expressionistic composition.” Moreover, another participant claims that it would be “interesting to explore when/how resistance is encountered to this assignment and ones like it, and for which populations the personal narrative is particularly challenging (or, for the matter, particularly rewarding).”

In addition to narrative being met with resistance by students or departments, instructors also reference how narrative can be difficult for students in FYC. One teacher writes that the narrative is difficult to teach in FYC “because it is so different from the formal 5-paragraph

essays most high school students are trained to make.” Another participant remarks that the narrative can be difficult for students due to the unfamiliar genre.

Summary

In this section, participants indicate the additional benefits, diversity or differences, meaning making or knowledge building, and resistance or difficulties with narrative in FYC. Themes that are referenced less by participants include the value or experience from narrative, and participants unclear of what narrative means in context to the survey.

Part II: Interviews

This section provides a synopsis of themes that emerge from the qualitative interviews for Part II of my study. I recruited participants for interviews through the survey featured in Part I. At the end of the survey, participants were asked the following question:

Would you like to be included in a follow-up interview to provide more information for this study? Note that if you choose yes then you will be contacted by email to arrange a follow-up interview by phone or remote conferencing (preferably Zoom) to be asked an additional 2-3 questions?

If participants answered “no” to the question, the survey was completed. If participants answered “yes” to the question, they were then directed to provide their name and email address to be contacted for a subsequent interview.

31 participants showed interest in participating and were emailed to set up an interview. Of the 31 interested, 23 were interviewed for this project. 20 interviews were completed over Zoom, and 3 interviews were completed by telephone. The audio from each interview was recorded with the participant’s permission. Length of interviews ranged from 14 minutes to 50 minutes, with an average interview time of 24 minutes. There were 8.3 hours of data and 143 pages of transcripts from the interviews.

Emerging Themes

Using critical grounded theory, I conducted a qualitative analysis of instructors of FYC to share their experiences of their use of narrative in their pedagogies. This method allowed for participants to help shape the thematic analysis of the study by moving through data collection and analysis simultaneously, while unearthing systems of power that may be present. After creating an initial codebook, I revisited codes and themes as I conducted interviews. The critical aspect of grounded theory allowed me to explore the dominant knowledge production interest. After all data was collected, I worked with two undergraduate student and one graduate student coders to reach intercoder reliability. The major themes that emerged from the interviews of the participants are as follows:

- Writing and Rhetorical Skills
- Awareness of Agency
- Pedagogical Goals
- Course Objectives
- Community Building
- Destabilizing Dominant Knowledge Production

All themes seek to answer RQ1 of my study:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?

Additionally, awareness of agency, community building, and destabilizing dominant knowledge production seek to answer RQ2 of my study:

- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

In this section, I explain each theme and provide descriptions from the interviews as evidence. To protect the participant’s identities, all have been given pseudonyms and all gender identities are gender neutral (they/them).

Writing and Rhetorical Skills

Writing and rhetorical skills is referenced 44 times by a total of 19 participants. Participants reference the relationship between writing and rhetorical skills often in interviews, claiming that narrative provides students with different types of writing and rhetorical skills. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 9. Writing and Rhetorical Skills

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Descriptive Writing	7	Attention getter; creative writing; language and perception; richness of details.
General Writing Skills	7	Ease students into academic writing; learning through a familiar form; skepticism of narrative.
Personal Experience as Evidence	5	Experience as argument; narrative strengthens claims; support for personal claims.

Specifically, many participants reference the connection between narrative and descriptive writing. One participant, Sam, states that narrative is helpful for their students as it provides them with a “richness of details” through writing and helps showcase the “power of language and perception.”

Another participant, Millie, explains that narrative can help show students the value of descriptive writing by blending description with creative writing: “I always tell students like even the most dry academic work you’re doing is creative. And for me as your audience as a teacher, I really privilege creativity. So, the more creative then the better.” When asked why they privilege creativity, Millie responds:

I think we have this idea of what creativity looks like and what creative writing looks like and then what “serious journalistic academic writing”⁷ looks like, which is nonsense, and that feeds into, you know, dissing the humanities, which we see all the time [. . .] that narrative is some fluffy thing that rich girls who want to study poetry do. But this is your argument. These are your claims. This is how you support them. And the idea is well that’s not creative work, that’s analytical, and I disagree so completely because I know like I think of myself as a creative person and I think that creativity means [. . .] drawing from many ideas, observations being able to drawn from many different sources, being able to reposition yourself mentally to see situations from different angles. [. . .] But you know your creativity, your own voice or style or arrangement is the thing that will get your work read or listen to, right? It’s the thing that will make your brilliant ideas accessible and part of the conversation.

Like Millie, others like Jin, agree that narrative coupled with academic writing can serve as a powerful attention getter through description:

[In investigative journalism] A lot of times it’ll begin with a specific set of narrative and it will tell a longer story that might include dialogue or, you know, lush description or a specific setting. [. . .] Then from the story it moves outwards [. . .] to the, you know, sort

⁷ Millie is being sarcastic here.

of like the big data. [When] students start looking at things like that, they start to see like oh, yeah, everything's using narrative, but there are these different reasons.

To these participants and others, narrative is useful as it aids with description.

In addition to descriptive and creative writing, participants explain in interviews that narrative is helpful for general writing skills. Riley, for example, states that academic writing can be intimidating, and that narrative can help ease students into academic writing by learning through a familiar form:

You try to get them to understand that the form is the same, kind of even when you're articulating your own story, it's kind of the same on paper. So, you're basically like talking as a text and trying to get them to see that there's a larger "what they can do in the micro" when they're talking about their own experiences. It's really all that a research paper or a concept essay or any other essay is, you just have to understand that, you know, what good writing is and it's easier to kind of do that from the narrative experience. It's easier to do that with something that's disarming, and I think that the narrative has a tendency to kind of help them get the tools in the toolbox without being intimidated.

While other participants like Jin agree with Riley, Jin's reports that students are often skeptical of narrative as an academic form: "They start saying, like, you know, they come into the class and say they don't use narrative in academic writing [. . .] which is something they've been drilled into probably in eighth grade or something like that." While Jin's students may be initially resistant to narrative, Jin further explains that as a class, they look for the narrative in different types of pieces in the classroom, like the methods section of a research paper, or a scientific paper, to help show the value of narrative in academic writing.

Moreover, participants claim that narrative can be helpful for students as it shows the value of personal experience and how that experience can be used build arguments or support personal claims. For example, Jin continues that through narrative writing assignment students learn the value of a story:

Students tell a story from [their] personal life in order to make a broader point about whatever argument that they're going to make about something new that they're going to say something about the problem. [For example], with female body image in early college and they're going to ground that in their experiences, [and how they] really pushed to go to the gym every day after class or something like that. And they use this narrative point to help convey their own emotions.

To Jin, through the use of personal experience, students can learn the value of incorporating evidence in an academic argument, as well as how to use narrative to strengthen claims.

Similarly, James states that students often struggle with making claims and that incorporating personal experience can help students become better writers:

I had previously been doing kind of like a very traditional synthesis assignment where they were reading these pieces about education and then just trying to build arguments by kind of like synthesizing them together and those were very like stiff. A lot of students really struggled with it. They were all kind of making the same sort of arguments. So when they started writing about their own experience, one of the things that surprised me was that I was really glad to see was the diversity of experiences and the diversity of the arguments they were making just kind of like exploded and so we were all sort of working together. We're all having these like very rich conversations about the same sort of topics in class, but how they were kind of like translating that into their writing and

sort of drawing on their own experience, was all very, very, different, which also led to really rich kind of peer interactions and peer reviews.

Although the participants reference different types of writing and rhetorical skills, they each articulate the value that narrative has in aiding students in developing these skills. Writing and rhetorical skills was the most prominent theme that emerged throughout the interviews. The following theme explores a quite different topic.

Awareness of Agency

Awareness of agency is the next most prominent theme that emerged in the interviews, which is referenced by 15 participants a total of 32 times. This theme differs from writing and rhetorical skills as it does not fit the conventional objectives or goals of FYC (“WPA Outcomes Statement”). Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 10. Awareness of Agency

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Finding Voice	5	Narrative is fun, safe, and explorative for students; sharing of personal experience; sharing of vulnerable experience.
Building Courage	4	Sharing personal experiences to build courage; therapeutic; vulnerability.
Assumptions	3	Examining stereotypes; questioning objectivity; understanding communities.
Caution Against Personal	3	Mindful of prompts; personal experiences can be problematic; students uncomfortable.

Participants believe that narrative helps students become better aware of their own agency, particularly through finding voice, as referenced by participant Millie:

I notice this with women especially, they say they love narrative writing because the pressure's off. It's fun for them. They feel like they can just sit down and start writing and their voice is in it. It's more like sometimes, it's more like a conversation. So yeah, they seem to love to feel the pressure's off. They seem to have more fun with it, and I don't think they get as caught up in their heads with what should this look like as an academic piece because that's another, that's a scary idea. You know, there's a right way and a wrong way to do it. You know, I guess they've had enough experience in high school and prior with creative assignments, you know, like fun language arts days to know that it's like it's safe and explorative.

The idea of narrative writing being safe and explorative is also referenced by Giannis, as they share their experience with students' writing, particularly through that of coming out stories:

I've been getting a few coming out stories recently and it amazes me. I mean, I'm in my 50s. So it amazes me that these kids are coming out so early and so proudly and you know one [narrative writing assignment] that really stands out to me was a woman who was in middle school and her dad saw her kissing a neighbor girl and he was just completely cool with it. And you know, she built up the fear of "okay what's he going to say to me when he says something," and he was very accepting.

To Giannis, narrative is helpful for students to discover agency as it allows them to build courage in their writing through the sharing of their personal and vulnerable experience:

And of course, I always try to emphasize to the class that you don't have to have a dramatic story, some of you may not have the most dramatic thing to tell, it's more how

you tell it, where what's the meaning in it for you? But some of them do have pretty traumatic stories and stories that take a lot of courage to write and to others it's a very simple experience that I encourage them to tell just as well. I say, this is meaningful, however small it is, it sheds light on your experience, and it'll be meaningful to other people too.

Millie and Giannis both believe that one of the advantages of using narrative in FYC is that it provides students with a safe, but explorative way, to navigate through not only their own experiences, but also the experiences of others.

Similar to the idea of finding voice, participants further believe that narrative is helpful in FYC as it can help students better understand experiences through catharsis. Brian mentions that narrative writing can be therapeutic, although assignment prompts don't necessarily ask students to tell traumatic students. To Brian, narrative is a mode of writing therapy: "I have a woman come out to someone besides her blood kin for the first time in our class. [. . .] It was fabulous. It was remarkable."

Other participants, like Kennedy, agree that students tend to be vulnerable in their writing, even though the prompt does not explicitly ask for it. She explains that on the day the assignment is due, her students have the opportunity to share their stories, but it is an optional experience. To Kennedy, most students really enjoy sharing their work with others:

[A student writer] got really personal because she talked about the death of her mother and it was all through hand drawing. So, it was like pictures of her and her mother and she talked about writing letters to her mother and that was the connection to literacy, and it was really powerful, and she was totally, you know, okay with showing it publicly. Yes, there's the range of topics [but students often choose to be] vulnerable, a lot of the

students were comfortable because I gave them the option of they didn't have to show up publicly [when their assignment was due] if they didn't want to, but most of them did, which I was really pleased with. Even the ones who were hesitant at first to, you know, at the beginning would say, you know, I don't think I'm going to want to show this. And I'd say, you know, that's fine. You don't need to make that decision now, but most of them ended up wanting to show [their work].

Brian and Kennedy both state that an advantage of narrative in FYC is its therapeutic properties for students.

Other participants discuss how they believe narrative can be helpful for students to understand their own agency through questioning preconceived notions or assumptions. Shayna explains how narrative helps students question the objectivity of science through the use of podcasts:

I have them do a three-minute informative podcast where they're just giving facts and then we would talk about why that was interesting, why it wasn't interesting, you know, what would help and then we listen to three weeks of podcasts and read narratives of science gone bad, and then they had to do a three-minute reflection. Like they didn't have to research anything. They just had to think about the things that we've been reading about and listening to for the past three weeks and what effects they would have today on modern day life and those reflections were good. I mean they were they were actual reflections. It wasn't them trying to repeat back to me something that I've said or trying to anticipate what I would want them to say, but just honest reflections about the effects that the lack of women represented in science has on driving around town in your car because one of the podcast we listen to said that the crash test dummies are based on the male

frame. As a result of that, is things like women who are driving behind the wheel and are in an accident, are 40 percent more likely to die because the safety systems aren't built for the women frame. All of the podcast has had things like that and all of a sudden they [the students] were in their podcasts talking about their mom driving around or they were talking about their moms taking medications that hadn't been tested on women just on men, they were talking about their friends like "oh no now I know why they think their doctors full of shit," when talking about what kind of medication I need for my diabetes. Or, 'I don't want to go in to see my doctor,' or, 'I can't really trust some of these motives' because of the whole variety of reasons and actions were just much more specific to modern-day happenings.

Luka also speaks about the assumptions students have, but mostly regarding those within their own communities:

I have small exercises where I first get them to see how they make assumptions. Yeah. So, they, I say close your eyes and picture a baseball player. What is the baseball player wearing? What gender is the baseball player? What do they have in their hands? And then I say, okay, now open your eyes. Okay. So how many of you pictured a man? How many of you pictured a white person? And what was the person wearing and what clothes and what kind of clothes did you picture? Like, where would you put them in the world on the map? Which country would you put them in if you had a cut out doll of this thing you pictured? And they just get to see that we have so many assumptions.

Luka explains that there tends to be resistance from students when they are asked to examine their own stereotypes, but ultimately, they gain a stronger idea of audience expectations. Shayna also mentions how some students can be resistant to challenging assumptions or stereotypes

based on the topic, but that other students can instead feel relief: “We had one [podcast] on how science got transgender incorrect, how they thought it was a binary, and then the more they find out that it's not, that really touched some students strongly and negatively depending on their political viewpoint, but it was really good conversation.”

To Shayna, Luka, and others, narrative is helpful for students examining their own agency through questioning preconceived notions or assumptions.

While most participants mention the benefits of personal narrative and sharing stories in FYC, other participants, such as Kennedy and Abram, caution against instructors asking students to get too personal. While Kennedy speaks earlier about the positive impacts of the personal, they caution instructors from requesting the sharing of trauma in assignment prompts:

So the way that I have a lot of friends who teach narrative and it kind of bothers me because they almost always ask students to get really personal, and they'll say all of my students are sharing their trauma, and I don't know why I always get papers like this. And I'm like well look at your assignment prompt and think about like even the way you're describing your lessons to me.

Additionally, Abram adds how instructor prompts asking for personal experiences can be problematic:

If you say to them write a personal narrative about your relationship with your parents, like that is incredibly problematic. What if they, you know, if they grew up in the foster care system, if they lived in an abusive home, if you know, a parent just recently died. I mean you're running so many issues. And so [I try to avoid prompts like that]. But, I, you know, if you're reading about parents and stuff like that, you know, I can see where someone would go that direction, but I think it's important that you try to keep it true to

like how is this going to improve their writing. I just, I think you have to be careful is what I'm saying, you have to be careful with personal narrative in terms of what is its purpose. Like what is the reason you're using it? What is it? What are you trying to get? What's the outcome you want and then making sure that's what you're doing.

While both Kennedy and Abram are in favor of the use personal narrative in FYC, they encourage instructors to be more mindful and cautious of their prompts and examine their true purpose for including them.

Instructors were not asked explicitly about student agency; however, awareness of agency was still a major theme throughout the interviews.

Pedagogical Goals

Pedagogical goals is the next most noticeable theme, with a total of 20 references by 13 participants. Participants reference the relationship between narrative and pedagogical goals, and while pedagogical goals differ between participants, a majority of participants believe narrative can help them reach these goals. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 11. Pedagogical Goals

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Better Understanding Research	4	Peer review; professional storytellers; talking through narrative leads to understanding.
Audience Connection	3	Audience focused; narrative frame.
Clarity of Assignments	3	Outline assignment; simpler assignments; relaxed prompt.
Thinking Critically	3	Critical aspect of telling stories; debunking the myth of two sides; identifying facets of identity.

One particular goal that is referenced frequently by participants is getting students to talk about, or better understand, their own research. Pearl, for example, believes that having students talk about their research through narrative allows them to better understand their own research. Pearl accomplishes this pedagogical goal through a poster session that incorporates the elements of peer review:

It's a group exercise that takes the concept of a poster session and brings it into the classroom and ask students to become the presenter of their research. And so there's a little bit of the Vanna White elements, but there's also a little bit of that academic discourse there where you can talk about your passion in the sources you've read and the ideas you have on the topic and then other people can ask questions of your research and then bring their own ideas because they've also research.

Pearl believes that the narration of a poster session can oftentimes be more effective than peer review, as it provides students with a greater platform to share their thinking and rhetorical choices in a more fun and engaging way.

Like Pearl, Eli also speaks to how narrative can help students better understand their own research. In Eli's class, they invite professional storytellers to speak to the classroom. Eli believes that these storytellers let students learn more closely about their research topics as "hearing these people tell their stories suggest to the students what they might be able to write about in their papers, but particularly in their research projects. [. . .] They get to learn about something they didn't know before."

Another pedagogical goal that participants reference is the idea of getting student's to better connect to their audience. Shayna speaks to this pedagogical goal and how a narrative frame can aid with audience connection:

So, I'm trying to get my students to connect to their audience. I always bring things back to audience, purpose, context. And so the narrative frame is that you start with an interesting idea that your hook in the introduction and you connect everything to that idea throughout the narrative and you come back throughout your essay and you come back to it at the end. You keep your eye on the idea. You keep your audience focused on the main idea that you want them to get in the text and you do it through your story through your narrative frame.

Other participants, like Kennedy and Sam, show interest in making their narrative assignments clearer and simpler for students to understand to help aid with comprehension and clarity. Kennedy speaks to the pedagogical goal of making their narrative assignment clearer to students:

So I'm trying to make my assignment simpler overall, you know, because I have a tendency to kind of give too much detail in the assignment prompts because I'm the type of person who I want to know exactly what I'm supposed to be doing. I want to know; I want all of my instructions in one place. I want all of my questions answered, but then my students get overwhelmed. So, I'm trying to sort of distill that into just the necessary info.

Like Kennedy, Sam claims that they try outline their assignment more clearly by having a more relaxed prompt in to give students more freedom with writing:

My goal is to simply see without any real restrictions other than a prompt as to how they are at writing-wise and personally, I have all these different metrics like okay, what's their command of grammar? Whether it's a dialectic or dialects grammar or standard academic English grammar, whatever. You know, how intentional are they about their language use? And for them I simply say: "have at it." There are no grades attached to this assignment, so you don't even have that as a motivator for performance.

Sam believes that giving students more freedom in writing assignments, without judgement, creates a stronger metric for subsequent assignments.

Another pedagogical goal that participants reference is encouraging students to think more critically about their ideas. Malik, who assigns a hometown essay narrative, pairs the concept of audience with critical thinking:

So, I would tell them you're writing to somebody who has no clue what your town is like and the intention is not to persuade me to come and settle in your town. That is not what I want because they assume that their job is to tell me how wonderful their town is and how much they love their town. That's not the point. I really want them to tell me

something critical about it. So, I would tell them you don't want to write information that I would get from a Wikipedia page of your Chamber of Commerce. I don't want any of the information that I would be able to get. I want insider information of you growing up there. So, I'm asking them for stories which they don't even get what I'm doing. When they try to answer that, they tell me stories. They would tell me stories about going to high school. They would tell me stories of what is it like to be poor in that town what it is like to be middle class in that town, what it is like to be a boy in that town what it is like to be a girl in the town. I push them to you know, kind of really identify ways of diversity, sexual orientation, class, you know where do the poor live where do the rich live, where do the division exist in your town and they are thinking suddenly of their town in very different ways. And then then they tell me stories.

Malik believes that the power of narrative lies within the critical aspect of telling stories and that students can think more critically by telling their stories about their hometowns. James speaks in the same way to Malik, claiming that narrative is useful for debunking the “myth of two sides:”

One of the things that we talked about is trying to get out of this myth that there are two sides, that there's like a pro and con to each debate, and I'm instead asking to think about, like, where these different people who are writing about this. Like, where are they coming from? What's their perspective? What's the story that they're telling you about? Why does this matter to them? And, so, we were kind of using that narrative framing to think more broadly about the kinds of arguments that people are making and the kinds of investments people have so they're not just collapsing everything into that for and against binary.

To both Malik and James, the pedagogical goal behind narrative is to have students think more critically about not only their perspectives but the perspectives of others.

The theme of pedagogical goals is similar to the next theme as it examines the relationship between narrative and meeting course objectives.

Course Objectives

Like pedagogical goals, course objectives as a theme is referenced a total of 20 times by 13 participants. Pedagogical goals and course objectives somewhat aligning as themes, as they both have to do with institution and instructor choice. Participants reference the relationship between narrative and course objectives and how these objectives are met, or not met, through the use of narrative. While course objectives may vary by institution or institution type, reoccurring themes occur within the interviews. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 12. Course Objectives

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Not Incorporated Well	5	Lack of connection to students who are not English majors; lack of good examples; what is the point of narrative.
Rhetorical Functions	4	Context; transfer.
Writing Skills	4	Unlearning high school concepts; writing for an audience.

While most participants claim that narrative is helpful for meeting course objectives, instructors say that it is often not incorporated well in FYC. This idea is supported by Hunter who states: “I think that narrative has a very important role to play in the way that first-year composition comes together. I don’t know that I’ve seen a lot of good examples of how it can be used to accomplish this goal.” The idea of a lack of good examples is also echoed by Sam who states that “I don’t think it’s something we are taught how to teach. [. . .] So, I would love to be taught some strategic, like, when and where and why to use narrative [and] what is the point of it? Is it just to get students to talk about themselves?”

Similarly, Luka states that narrative often is not incorporated well in FYC objectives and that it does not tend to appeal well to students outside of being an English major:

Yeah, I think it's generally not effectively used, and I don't think it's a well thought-out in terms of first-year composition as the service course for non-English majors. What is the goal? What are the learning goals? What do we want these students to gain from the course that advances their communication skills, especially in non-English and non-liberal arts fields? [. . .] I think that the narrative props and assignments as given are such subject English privileged, they are for the first people who take the subject English as their major. I just don't think their designed well [. . .] and I think the assignments are used wrong. [. . .] We should have narrative, but it should be narrative about things like, you know, upcoming elections and democracy, and like things like racial injustice I think it should be applied to have people write about now, instead of, you know, my childhood and my high school was like this, and it just seems really immature. Right like we're asking them to write some kind of flowery meaningful, you know heartwarming very prosaic kind of beautiful piece of literature. And I think we should be having them tell

stories of what's hard. Tell the story of what's doesn't work. What's bad? What's hard? What's wrong? What needs change?

While some participants claim that narrative is often not incorporated well to meet course objectives, other participants believe that narrative is useful for meeting the course objectives of rhetorical functions. Victor, for example, claims that narrative is useful for meeting the concept of transfer: “And, so it’s always there, telling a story about what they might be doing. And we often do this in the context of transfer, you know, the question they have to tell or the question. They have to address how is this that they've learned, and how what they've learned in comp is going to transfer to their learning elsewhere and they're writing elsewhere?”

Similarly, Shayna, references how narrative better helps their students understand context. Shayna accomplishes this course objective through narratives of the Tuskegee experiment:

I have to say their understanding of context was amazing [as] they seem to be able to understand the deeper issues. So, with the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, you know, we talked about these experiments that scientists may have had positive ideas, not positive ideas, good intentions. They had good intentions, but for some, you know, because of the lack of ethics, it went horribly wrong, and students can very easily repeat back to me the facts and the negative facts, but for some reason why, I think it's the podcast narratives, but this semester the students really understood the effects of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment that was done. You know, how many hundred years, decades ago, all of a sudden my students are realizing that it's affecting their black friends today and how much their friends trust or don't trust the medical establishment that you know, there's

this decade gap of when things were actually done but because it's now in living memory.

It's still having an effect.

Both Shayna and Victor incorporate narrative in their FYC classrooms to meet course objectives such as rhetorical functions.

In addition to teaching students rhetorical functions, a course objective that participants reference frequently is that of writing skills. Riley claims that narrative is used in their classroom to “undo everything that’s been done to them” from primary education. Juan speaks somewhat similarly to Riley, but focuses more on helping students improve their writing skills and writing for an audience:

When I say to my students is that the kind of writing that they're doing in school up until like age 12 is that they're writing for their teacher, you know, like your history teacher assigned you an essay about the three main causes of the Civil War and it's not because your history teacher little clueless about Civil War. It's because they want to know that you did the reading and you can connect the pieces in a way that's well supported. That shows that you understand the larger picture of things when you graduate from school. Nobody is ever going to give you that kind of assignment again, right? Your boss is never going to say tell me about what I already know, they're going to say write me a report about stuff that I don't know about yet. Oh, yeah, or you know, here's the data and you need to frame it for this particular set of shareholders and so in thinking about writing for an audience, I think in many cases our students are already very familiar with that concept, even if they don't know it because they already know that the story about what happened last Saturday night is going to be a little bit different if they tell it to like grandma or a crazy person versus if they tell it to a friend from high school. And so I

think that having that personal level of narrative is a very useful entry for them into the world of thinking about writing for an audience and therefore into the world of thinking about professional writing just because you're not going to be writing for teacher once you graduate.

Juan, Riley, and other participants agree that narrative is useful for helping meet the course objectives of writing skills.

Throughout the interviews, participants mention how narrative does, or does not, help meet their course objectives. The next theme examines a different phenomenon that emerges regarding narrative and FYC.

Community Building

The next most notable theme to emerge is community building, which is referenced a total of 18 times by 11 participants. This theme is similar to awareness of agency, as it deals less with an objective or outcome of FYC. Participants that reference community building claim that the incorporation of narrative allows their classes to form a community inside, and outside, the classroom. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 13. Community Building

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Community Building Inside the Classroom	7	Essential for growth; form commonalities; peer interaction and bonding; sharing ideas.
Community Building Outside the Classroom	4	Analyzing own communities; stronger familial ties; workforce development;

James states that narrative is help for peer interaction and bonding within the FYC classroom:

So, when they started writing about their own experience, one of the things that surprised me was that I was really glad to see was the diversity of experiences and the diversity of the arguments they were making just kind of like exploded and so we were all sort of working together. We're all having these like very rich conversations about the same sort of topics in class, but how they were kind of like translating that into their writing and sort of drawing on their own experience was all very, very different, which also led to a really rich kind of peer interactions and peer reviews. So, it's a really nice kind of community building exercise in the class.

James continues, claiming that the community building in the course allows students to better share ideas with one another:

It is interesting, [community building] kind of frees them to, or sort of gives them the encouragement that they need to, kind of move forward with that good idea that they had. So, I try to build in a lot of moments for the for students to share ideas with each other to

get sort of feedback on emerging ideas to share some of their early writing if they're comfortable. Although I don't require them to do that. Yeah, lots of stuff like that.

Much like James, Chen also states that narrative builds classroom community. For Chen, having students understand their writing vulnerabilities is essential for students to grow as not only writers, but also as learners:

I just think [that incorporating narrative] is a great way to build classroom community. Yeah, and I think it's I think it's easier for students to write and I think it breaks down the walls. When I open class, I ask my students how many of them love to write and none of them raise their hands, right? [. . .] We do like to write. You know, they just kind of look at me and I said somewhere, someone along the way has made you believe that you don't like to write. And I apologize for that, and I said, you know, I say, I'm sorry for that. I'm sorry for whoever did that to you. But you know, we're going to start this year by writing stories, your stories, your made-up stories, your true stories, you know, that help me to understand who you are. So that I can be the best teacher for you, that I can be, and I think that that does so many things. It opens their minds. It allows them to write again and it recognizes that they, you know, they may have horrible writing experiences in the past. It gives them permission to be creative and to share details in a really safe place and I think that that and no matter what class, whether it was a math class or a science class, when you allow students that safe place to be vulnerable you're going to get so much out of them as far as content wise the rest of the semester.

To both James and Chen, narrative can be helpful to increase peer interaction and bonding in the FYC classroom, which leads to the forming of a community.

Angelo agrees, claiming that students in FYC are able to form commonalities with different experiences through the use of narrative:

I had a student from Saudi Arabia, a student from [the] UK and students from the local area, and students from other parts of the state, and all that they pick up on commonalities growing in that people growing up in different countries, you know, they kind of learn language the same way, you know? It was even though it was a different language. [. . .] So, that becomes interesting to read as an instructor, but I think the fact that students can pick up on that and they, you know, utilize that they find that each of these interesting things and a student last fall came from a poor area of [urban city] who didn't have a library here in his high school. Yeah and like and that's so like some of the people in his group they touched on that and the importance of the access to materials. And, so they talked about some talk about how you know, I had a library never went to it. Whereas this student didn't have a library.

Like Angelo, other participants describe how vulnerable students can be in their narrative, which helps build classroom community. Kennedy mentions how students “really open [up] about traumatic events that have happened or about learning disabilities that they’ve struggled with,” while Bri shares an anecdote of a student whose father went to jail for second-degree murder had to share their story with the class: “She said I just knew this was a story I had to write she said I was hesitant and I was a little thought while I'm making myself feel very vulnerable to my classmates, but she felt very good about doing it. And so those are the things that surprised me when students take those chances and their courageous in telling stories.”

Both Kennedy and Bri, as well as other participants, believe that the sharing of experiences in the FYC classroom can help build a community that is personally meaningful.

While the above participants agree that narrative is impactful with community building inside the FYC classroom, other participants examine how narrative can create and build community outside of the classroom. For example, James talks about how their narrative assignment allows for compelling analysis of students' own communities:

Yeah, and so to see in the students kind of like brought that, you know, like what this event meant to them as like 18- and 19-year old's, into the pieces in a way that was really compelling. There was a shooting in [midwestern urban city] the same weekend as the [southern urban city] and I have students who are from [midwestern urban city] who have also been able to bring their experience and their perspective on their hometown into that piece in a way that is also really compelling. And they can kind of see how that [experience] adds to the piece [as it] is an important part of their analysis. It is important evidence that otherwise they might have been tempted to leave out because they don't think it's scholarly enough. [. . .] They're kind of talking about their own connections to their communities right about sort of thinking about like, what is the expertise that you have in this community and how can you use that to kind of build up your ethos, right?

Similarly, Hunter also describes how narrative can help community building outside of the classroom, particularly in the workforce:

They really seem to enjoy [the narrative assignment] especially when they actually talk to people in their fields and that they've been able to run with it enough to actually get tangible results that aren't related to school as well. I've had two students so far that got letters of recommendation from people. They interviewed or did observations with one person and got an internship with the guy that he interviewed after doing the assignment. I know a few others have formed better relationship with instructors that they can then

take classes with, or that they can draw upon later as well in that they've maintained some of those relationships. So, the fact that a number of students have run with it enough to get some to show that there is some benefit to doing this kind of research and this type of communication that goes beyond just the first-year comp classroom or whatever writing class. They have to take it.

Both James and Hunter agree that narrative is helpful for students to better understand their own communities.

Like James and Hunter, Bri also talks about community building, but states that narrative helps build community within students' families: "And sometimes they can even encourage them to ask their family [about their assignment], I always like seeing that by the way, when students will tell me, 'Oh, because of the topic I was writing on I talk to my parents or grandparents or my uncle my aunt and to learn more about it.' And I think that's always great to facilitate that cross-generational conversation."

Much like with the theme of awareness of agency, although instructors were not explicitly asked about community building, it was still a major theme that was expressed throughout the interviews.

Destabilize Dominant Knowledge Production

The next most referenced theme that was reoccurring throughout interviews is destabilizing dominant knowledge production. This theme was mentioned by 9 participants a total of 12 different times, describing the relationship between narrative and the ability to destabilize dominant knowledge production. Below is a table that shows a summary of the themes that were frequently repeated by participants in analysis, how many references were made to the respective theme, and a brief overview of how the theme was indicated.

Table 14. Destabilize Dominant Knowledge Production

Theme	References by Participants	Explanation of Theme
Challenge Dominant Modes of Thinking	3	Ability; class; gender; gender identity; myth of the traditional family; race.
Critical Thinking	3	Deeper understanding; stories as persuasion;
Resistance	3	Counterstory; students resist critical concepts; resistance to standardization

Juan, for example, uses narrative to help students understand that it is not always a bad thing to be wrong:

We don't understand how we make our decisions, and this is used as the framework for rethinking the way we understand our understanding of things: basically, it's not a bad idea to be wrong. It's just a bad idea to not notice that you are ever wrong, right? So, I use [this premise] to then ask students to think about how they and what they think about people across differences on, and we go: race, class, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc., and then have them start thinking about where they might be wrong. I have some room to be wrong in their thoughts.

Like Juan, Jin also speaks to how narrative is used to get students to think about how stories can persuade others how to think more critically about dominant modes of knowledge production:

It's like a nice little like hodgepodge of different ways that we use narrative and that we talked about how you know, the academia pushes argument as a genre so much, but that storying as a way of explaining is a way that's much less like, sort of like, hegemonically,

dominantly white capitalist, and that you know for a lot of people that occasionally, like when I get first gen students around, or occasionally students of color, like a lot of them come from places where a lot of people around them have not gone to college, and so they're thinking about like not like, how can I hammer somebody over the head with this information? But how can I share it with somebody they would do that via story? Like, you know, "oh when I was in this class, I was learning about this and this," is narrative things that they're thinking about. So, if I can get them to like to incorporate that into the writing that's a useful thing for them, and also it sort of, you know, blows out the different views of what writing can be.

To both Juan and Jin, narrative is incorporated in the FYC classrooms as a way to help challenge the dominant modes of thinking.

Other participants, like Brian, use narrative to destabilize the myth of the traditional American family:

If you grew up with the image of a certain kind of family, you probably got it from television, from the internet, from family members, maybe from old family photographs, maybe from stories your people tell, but you have an idea of what 'the' family looks like, whether it's yours or reaction to yours. Let's look at some ways other people have written about their families. And then let's tell a story about our own families. And for the purposes of this assignment, family is not limited to those you are related to by blood. I always have to indicate that because there's the families of choice as well as the families of chance and perhaps the closest thing you've had in your family was that year that you were on the gymnastics team and you had a gym team mom and gym team sisters, and maybe it was your band camp and the three years you went to summer band camp and

had a band camp dad and band camp brothers. So, we're defining family very broadly and partly because I want to destabilize those myths about heterosexual family 2.8 kids white picket fence single-family home two cars in the drive. I just think that's a pernicious myth

Other participants, like Imani, speak to the importance of counter story to help resist standardization:

I worked in a program where narrative was not part of the writing, you know, we did the sort of more standard research papers and, which I wasn't always comfortable with, and in the sense that I just felt like, you know, I mean it goes to the, you know, conversation about standard versus non-standard, and so I really embrace this narrative thing, narrative thing, that's very formal. But anyways, um, but you know, I really feel like it's important and I know the whole idea of like counter stories and just being able to express other ways of like under other ways of expressing knowledge other ways of you know, expressing things that are important.

Both Brian and Imani reference the importance of destabilizing dominant knowledge production.

While Brian and Imani share their thoughts on the resistance of the American family and standardization, respectively, other participants focus more on issues of gender and race. Millie shares that narrative writing is often beneficial for women due to the power of storytelling:

You know some feminists have argued that it's really sexist when we don't privilege individuals stories, you know, because we see that all the time: 'Like oh, that's just that one woman's story, but it doesn't matter because it's all anecdotal. It's just storytelling.' When really, you know, like women's personal storytelling is that it has been around a long time and it's essential to community building and knowledge sharing. So again,

pushing that aside in favor of a very traditional masculine ways of producing discourse is an issue. So there definitely needs to be more and acceptable blend of that.

Like Millie, Malik also describes how they incorporate pedagogies that examine dominant modes of knowledge production, such as gender, race, and class. Malik states that students sometimes resist these concepts: “So they learn to be critical, and to write about race, class, and gender, which otherwise they won't, and these are you know, these are issues that if you try to teach in a programmatic way, there is such resistance. If I were to bring in like gender, I would be having arguments in class. I don't want to do that.” However, Malik believes narrative can be helpful for obviating such resistance:

When I ask the question: how does gender function in your town in terms of what do 15-year-old boys do, and what is possible for girls in your town? [. . .] They point out that in their towns it expected that there are only two professions for women, either a nurse or a teacher. And that if a girl gets pregnant, I mean, by the time she's 16, 17, what are the things that lead to her getting pregnant? The minute they do that, I mean they are doing, you know, [the] kind of critical analysis that if I were to bring in an essay and do that analysis there would be such resistance, here they do it on their own and they explain it to the class. They tell the class, they narrate and narrate, and class discussions are full of stories, full of stories. [. . .] [I tell them] I grew up in a different culture where there was no drinking age and they would always turn drinking stories, and how terrible it is, then I would ask them: you know, what about sex education? Like in the country that I grew up in, abortion is a medical procedure and it is not kind of fetishized the way it is here. And so, they would then talk about, each of them would tell stories of how sex took place in their classrooms, students who never speak would tell a story. They were there all in

eighth grade and there would so there's so much narration going on which then is reflected in the essays that they write.

Millie, Malik, and others express the importance of challenging students to think more critically about dominant modes of knowledge production though the use of narrative.

Much like with the themes of awareness of agency and community building, although participants were not explicitly asked about destabilizing dominant modes of knowledge production, it was still a major theme that was expressed throughout the interviews.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter has presented the results of Part I and Part II of the project. In Part I, open-ended surveys were used to collect data from instructors of FYC in the Midwest from various demographics and institution types. In Part II, qualitative interviews were conducted with instructors who participated in those surveys. The qualitative interviews revealed several emerging themes such as writing and rhetorical skills, awareness of agency, pedagogical goals, course objectives, community building, and destabilization of dominant knowledge production. The next chapter will begin with a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to gain a more complete understanding of the use of narrative in FYC and determine if it is being used to destabilize dominant knowledge production. To investigate these questions, I conducted a two-part research study seeking to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?
- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

In this final chapter, I start by reviewing the methodology for my study and the results from the project. I then provide a discussion of the surveys, followed by a discussion of the interviews. I then situate my interpretations within a critical grounded approach highlighted through Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren's "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research," and suggest implications for composition studies and rhetoric and critical theory. I follow with a conclusion that provides the limitations of the study and a recommendation for future research. I then end the dissertation with further thoughts and reflections.

Summary of Results and Interpretations

For Part I of this study, I conducted surveys with open-ended questions through Qualtrics where I surveyed 108 instructors of FYC across R1, RPC, and LA colleges throughout the Midwest. After receiving 60 surveys, I applied thematic analysis, and was able to extract themes from the survey participants that will be discussed later in the chapter.

For Part II of the study, I followed up with 23 of the survey participants who were interested in completing in-depth interviews about their experiences with narrative in FYC. Using critical grounded theory, I conducted a qualitative analysis of instructors of FYC to share their experience using narrative in their pedagogies. I was able to identify emerging themes through the data. The chosen method of analysis allowed for participants to help shape the thematic analysis of the study by having the participants help me move through data collection and analysis simultaneously, while unearthing systems of power that may be present within the data.

One of the larger takeaways from this study is that narrative is being used in a myriad of ways that primarily contains improving writing skills and rhetorical skills for students that differs from the existing literature. In the literature review, a primary critique of narrative was narrative's lack of transfer to other forms of academic writing, but this simply was not the case in my study as instructors spoke often as to how narrative is useful for the concept of transfer. Another interesting piece of information is how narrative is often used as an exemplar for model and style for what participants constitute "good writing." Moreover, narrative is often seen as a starting point in the literature as well as for instructors in the surveys and interviews, but some instructors desire news ways to incorporate narrative in the classroom, but they are unsure of how to do so.

Another important takeaway from this dissertation is the use of narrative outside of improving writing skills and rhetorical skills. I expected that participants would speak to the relationship between narrative and writing skills and rhetorical skills, but more surprisingly, participants also spoke at length about narrative and destabilizing dominant knowledge production even when not prompted to do so. There seems to be a connection between narrative

and facets of identity and instructors are eager to explore and resist dominant modes of production in their classrooms. Moreover, some of the other results such as awareness of agency and community building were also referenced often, despite these themes not generally being associated with the institutional or course objectives of FYC. Even more surprisingly, participants were not asked about awareness of agency or community building directly in the surveys or interviews, but the concepts were still common themes. This leads me to believe that a reconceptualized curriculum of FYC may benefit from incorporating new elements that are not typically associated with college writing. These takeaways will be explored in more detail in the following sections.

The next section (Part I: Surveys) will examine the summary of results and interpretations of the surveys, then the following section (Part II: Interviews) will examine the summary of results and interpretations of the interviews. Both of these parts serve to answer RQ1. Both of these sections are situated within the literature that I examined in Chapter 2, which includes the “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.” The “WPA Outcomes Statement” is regarded as a general guideline of objectives for FYC within writing programs and institutions.

It is important to note that the “WPA Outcomes Statement” is not an objective document and can be criticized as it operates under the appearance of authority and neutrality. For example, rhetorical knowledge is listed as a chief outcome for FYC, but if an instructor chooses not to incorporate this body of knowledge that does not necessarily make their class less effective. Moreover, the “WPA Outcomes Statement” cannot possibly list every objective, and due to the autonomous nature of writing instruction, teachers may incorporate, or choose not to incorporate, whichever elements of the statement they see fit. My point is that the “WPA Outcomes

Statement” can be useful as it does have scholarly and institutional backing, but its use to stakeholders may vary due to alignment with personal, institutional, and course objectives.

Part I: Surveys

The purpose of the open-ended survey questions is to glean data related to the use of narrative in first-year composition and determine whether it is destabilizing dominant knowledge production by giving participants autonomy in their answers. The more prominent themes that emerged from the surveys and that were interwoven throughout the questions are the following: writing skills, rhetorical skills, narrative as a starting point, and the personal.

Writing Skills

The most salient theme throughout the surveys is writing skills or writing strategies and participants largely agree that narrative writing contains value for academic writing much like other assignments in FYC due to the multifaceted purposes of the narrative genre. Improving students’ ability to write is one of the most important objectives of first-year composition. This is not surprising because the purpose of freshman composition, as told by the “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition,” and most course descriptions of surveyed institutions, references various forms of writing skills and strategies, and have students compose in a wide variety of genres. The “WPA Outcomes Statement” articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory, and maintain that writing knowledge and practices that students develop in first-year composition is one of the chief goals of the course. For example, the statement recommends that students should be able to engage in composing processes, which relates to “writers using multiple strategies, or composing processes, to conceptualize, develop, and finalize projects” (“WPA Outcomes”). Additionally, students should be able to develop a writing project through multiple drafts and engage in the

writing process and modes of reflection. The data from the surveys demonstrates that narrative writing can aid with all of these skills.

Participants abundantly reference writings skills, writing strategies, or teaching students how to write well, in their responses to the first three questions: purpose of narrative (Q1), teaching pedagogies (Q2), and course objectives (Q3). For example, in Q1, participants claim that narrative is helpful for teaching writing strategies as students can examine micro-strategies of writing, and in Q2 narrative helps teach the importance of writing as a process through prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing. In addition, instructors claim in Q3 that narrative can also help students generate, select, and focus on a clear writing topic while engaging in the writing process. While other writing genres can also teach the above skills, participants claim that the narrative genre is perhaps the most useful due to student interest, engagement, and the personal aspects of narrative that form a stronger connection with the student.

Overwhelmingly, participants reference narrative and writing in relation to literacy, especially in Q1. Narrative, then, seems complementary to the “WPA Outcomes Statement” as it satisfactorily helps students engage in multiple aspects of process writing while having strong ties to student literacy. For example, most participants that reference the use of a narrative often do so in relation to a literacy narrative. A literacy narrative provides students with the tools to begin thinking about their reading and writing habits for not only FYC, but these habits can also extend beyond the classroom. This reflection helps students to better understand not only the importance of FYC but also allows them to set goals and outcomes to be accomplished throughout the course. There is, perhaps, not another type of writing outside of narrative that gives students the freedom to explore such perspectives in a personal manner.

Additionally, incorporating narrative to teach students to improve their writing is a common theme throughout the survey and is demonstrated in response to each question. Even in the survey questions that are not related to writing (Q4 and Q5), participants still emphasize the importance of writing. For example, Q4 asks participants how narrative destabilizes dominant knowledge production in their classroom, and some participants respond by saying they include authors of color in their reading lists to use as models of narrative writing. Furthermore, participants express how students write about their own identities with race, gender identities, and sexualities in their own narratives, despite the prompt not asking them to. Moreover, participants speak similarly to the idea of how narrative helps students to better understand marginalized identities by persuading students to question or reexamine their beliefs in a way that other academic essays do not. Much like the concept of literacy, the narrative genre seems to provide instructors and students with an outlet to discuss facets of identity in a manner that is personally meaningful.

Even more so, with Q5 (additional thoughts about survey) participants express interest in narrative due to it being a non-dominant form of academic writing. For example, participants discuss the importance of creative narrative writing. Instructors believe that the creative aspect gives students more agency in their writing by incorporating elements such as ideas, impressions, and memories, that are of interest and importance to students. These elements can then be transferred to other academic genres throughout the course or in other classes. Moreover, narrative functions as a form of written discourse that has multi-faceted benefits over other forms of academic writing, as highlighted above. Additionally, narrative can grapple with a wide variety of purposes such as to inform, to analyze, and to argue, among others. While the literature seems to suggest that narrative is less beneficial to teaching analytical and

argumentative skills (Beaufort; Hall and Minnix) participants in the surveys claim otherwise.

Specifically, participants claim that narrative writing in FYC contains value for academic writing much like the more institutional privileged genres such as expository and argumentative writing.

Rhetorical Skills

Much like writing skills, participants often reference rhetorical skills in relation to narrative and how narrative can help students develop rhetorical skills such as audience, purpose, genre, and transfer. The “WPA Outcomes Statement” focuses heavily on rhetorical skills being a primary goal in FYC, stating that students should build rhetorical knowledge by learning key rhetorical concepts such as audience, purpose, context, and conventions, through a wide variety of texts. Other rhetorical skills that the “WPA Outcomes Statement” mentions are genre, voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and structure. Similarly, course descriptions often speak to rhetorical skills and conventions that students will learn throughout the course.

In my study, participants reference rhetorical themes often throughout the survey. Much like writing skills, the references to rhetorical skills are not limited to a single question, but, rather, are interwoven throughout the data. According to participants in the survey, narrative is helpful for teaching a wide variety of rhetorical skills and knowledge. More specifically, participants link narrative to rhetorical thinking, audience, genre, purpose, and the rhetorical situation. Some participants claim that narrative can act as an exemplar for good writing and style, while other participants state that narrative can develop audience awareness by helping students better understand how their position as a writer affects a reader. Many participants speak about genre, and how narrative can help students better learn about genre and its conventions, and often how audience relates to genre. For one instructor, the narrative assignment helps students better understand genre conventions through the “fluctuating form” of narrative.

Narrative can also help students and instructors with knowledge transfer. As the “WPA Outcomes Statement” states: “As students move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, their abilities will diversify along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines as these writers move into new settings where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge.” In the surveys, participants emphasize the importance of narrative and the concept of transfer, suggesting that narrative writing helps students grasp more complex ideas, which helps build academic knowledge that can transfer to other writing assignments. Other participants discuss the important of narrative and how narrative helps create writing knowledge that can be extended to other classes and even to writing in one’s careers. Even more so, instructors claim that students tend to struggle with knowledge transfer between assignments, but the narrative assignment is usually less of a struggle. This is because the narrative genre is a familiar form for students due to the writing of one’s personal experiences and that students are generally comfortable transferring these experiences to other forms of writing genres. These claims go against the majority of literature, which argues that narrative lacks transfer to other forms of academic writing, such as argumentative or analytical writing assignments (Wardle), but does align with Lindquist and Halbritter’s claim that life stories serve current educational projects to help transfer rhetorical knowledge through the practice of narrative inquiry (“Document and Discovering Learning” 439).

Narrative as A Starting Point

Most instructors that reference a narrative assignment explain that it is the first assignment in the course due to the narrative genre being familiar to students, which allows students to get more involved in the course, and because narrative works well as a spring board to other academic assignments. I find the narrative assignment this interesting because it seems that instructors overwhelmingly incorporate narrative as an introductory assignment in FYC

instead of placing the narrative assignment in a different sequence. At Iowa State University, where I currently teach, the FYC curriculum emphasizes personal experience writing as the first step and then moves outward to observation, analysis, and then synthesis of other sources (“Iowa State University Instructor Guide”). While participants do not explicitly mention how their FYC curriculum is constructed, they may be operating under a similar model that focuses on the student’s perception of themselves before moving to other genres. For example, one participant explains that they begin the semester with a narrative because it is a familiar genre to students while some instructors claim that starting the course with a narrative helps students form discourse communities. Others mention how narrative acts as a starting point for the class as a springboard to other forms of academic writing. Many participants believe that narrative is often engaging and interesting to students as it allows students to talk about themselves, which is also a reason that they start with the assignment as it can get students more involved in the class. Participants also indicate that they include narrative at the beginning of the semester to form a baseline of writing skills and to help students shed the mentality of the 5-paragraph essay learned in high school. Although one participant surveyed includes a narrative assignment in the final portfolio, the majority of instructors begin the course with the assignment.

Within the literature, there are mixed reviews on narrative functioning as a starting point. For example, Hall and Minnix claim that one of the reasons that narrative is often seen as less important than other genres is due to being a starting point or bridge assignment: “We can perceive this loss of political importance when the genre becomes, as it often does, treated as a bridge to academic writing, or worse as a means of ‘easing students into’ academic writing” (“Beyond the Bridge Metaphor” 58). Conversely, J. Blake Scott claims that a narrative assignment is generally a starting point in FYC but does not view it negatively like Hall and

Minnix. Instead, he believes that narrative as a starting point can lead to further interrogation and reflection and can better help students build stronger argumentative essays (“Production Pedagogy” 111). It may be important to note that the “WPA Outcomes Statement” does not give a sequence of assignments, which may explain some of the mixed interpretations. Moreover, narrative as a starting point seems to function more as a pedagogical goal based on instructor preference rather than a course objective, as this theme is more widely discussed in Q3.

It is surprising to me that narrative is not incorporated more as a scaffolding device in FYC. Narrative as a starting point holds an important purpose, as shown above, but then the narrative genre seems to disappear from most of the participants’ curriculums. This disappearance could be due to the FYC curriculum switching the focus to other genres, or championing genres such as argumentation as analysis, but I think there is an importance using narrative as a scaffolding device. For example, a research paper may begin with a narrative to draw in the audience and build context and then return to the narrative throughout the essay to engage the reader. Or, an analysis paper may use personal stories from a student to better develop an argument. The data is clear that there is much value in students’ using personal experience as evidence, but it seems contained solely to the narrative genre, which is most likely due to the personal experience being less scholarly outside of the narrative genre.

Regardless of the literature, the data from participants supports narrative as a starting point, and useful as an introduction for academic writing. However, some instructors do indicate that narrative can be incorporated during any part of the curriculum through reflection assignments and end of semester portfolios.

The Personal

Similarly to narrative as a starting point, participants also reference the personal attributes of narrative often throughout the survey questions. This term is a bit more ambiguous and fluid

to participants and often encompasses a wide range of meanings. For example, in Q1 participants discuss personal experience from students being used as evidence to support claims, while in Q2 the personal is often linked to “getting to know students better,” reflection assignments, or ideologies of language. Participants also reference the personal in relation to Q4, which deals with destabilization of dominant knowledge production through personal stories or experiences. This reference suggests that the narrative genre acts as an invitation for students to draw on their experiences and own knowledge in ways other genres do not. For example, a student’s personal experience in an argumentative essay would most likely not be considered an appropriate source, but this experience would be welcomed in a narrative assignment. As such, narrative’s inclusivity not only helps to validate students’ experiences, but provides a range of experiences that give students a sense of belonging in the university. Even in Q5, the personal is a common theme that deals with personal stories, experience as evidence, and the overall value of the personal and how it can lead to community building. In the surveys, the personal is seen as a positive attribute for FYC.

However, the personal is not a common reference in Q3. Q3 asks participants to speak to how narrative helps meet course objectives. Participants did not reference the personal within this question, suggesting that personal writing or elements of the personal are not a course objective of FYC, but rather a personal choice as a pedagogical goal of instructors. The “WPA Outcomes Statement” does not mention personal writing, or elements of the personal shown above. As a result, personal writing or elements of the personal are largely not an institutional value or course objective of FYC. This could be due to expressivist concepts seen as a legacy of tacit traditions within the university, as Goldblatt suggests, and the discussion about writing instruction being more narrowly focused on school success and professional preparation in lieu

of personal writing. In an academic environment that operates under the context of budget cuts, larger class sizes, and standardized testing, personal writing seems to have been primarily relegated as an institutional objective. It may be important to note that the personal is broadly defined here in its relationship to FYC but the personal is often linked with narrative because it contains elements of a student's life or experience.

Despite the frequency of references to the personal in the surveys, the literature examining the personal in FYC is mixed. For example, Clancy Ratliff explains these notions of narrative as being too personal and states that she is not comfortable requiring it within assignments. (WPA-L 26 July). J. Blake Scott also notes that some students are hesitant to share their stories due to the personal nature of them ("Production Pedagogy 109). Conversely, Blake Scott also claims that personal narratives can help validate students as writers (112) and Caleb Corkery believes personal writing can help transition students to discourse communities and build confidence for student writers ("Narratives and Confidence Building" 49). The Symposium Collective also speaks largely to the benefits of personal narrative and various aspects of identity such as race, gender identity, sexuality, among others, as highlighted in my literature review.

Again, much like narrative as a starting point, the data collected and analyzed differs from the negative critiques of the personal in FYC. While the personal may not be recognized as a course objective of FYC, instructors in the survey still find great value incorporating a wide range of personal elements in their pedagogies.

Summary

This section has examined the prominent themes of the surveys, which include writing skills, rhetorical skills, narrative as a starting point, and the personal. These themes were the most salient ones that emerged. I anticipated writing and rhetorical skills to be referenced often due to the relationship between these skills and FYC and how the literature speaks to them

prolifically. As a result, these topics were not surprising as both the literature and participants believe that one of the main goals of FYC is to improve students writing and rhetorical skills.

However, the themes of narrative as a starting point and the personal were a bit more surprising as they were slightly more contested in the literature but seen as more favorable by participants. For example, in the surveys participants often referenced how narrative is useful as a starting point as it serves as a bridge to academic writing. However, I would like to see narrative incorporated more outside of the initial starting assignment for instructors as participants speak to how narrative can be useful throughout the entire semester. In regards to the personal, participants demonstrated that there is great value in personal writing in FYC to help reach course objectives and to meet pedagogical goals, despite the mixed reviews of personal writing in the literature.

Part II: Interviews

The purpose of including the qualitative interviews in my study is to gain a greater understanding of narrative in first-year composition and to determine whether it is destabilizing dominant knowledge production by following-up with participants that were interested in having a deeper conversation. The more prominent themes that emerged from the interviews and that were interwoven throughout the questions include writing skills and rhetorical skills, awareness of agency, pedagogical goals, course objectives, and community building.

Writing and Rhetorical Skills

Much like the surveys, participants in the interviews spoke largely about narrative and its relation to benefiting writing and rhetorical skills. Unlike the surveys, participants often marry writing and rhetorical skills together, rather than speaking about them independently. More specifically, many participants reference the connection between narrative and descriptive writing, like Sam and Millie, to help better showcase language by making stronger claims and to

make academic work more accessible to an audience. In the surveys, instructors often talk about descriptive writing and link it to narrative and writing, but not to the same extent in the interviews. The interviews go beyond the benefits of narrative and descriptive writing and add that narrative can be coupled with traditional academic essays, like in an introduction to tell a vignette, or in a methods section to walk the reader through the researcher's methodology. Participants also claim that narrative aids with evidence and support in analytical essays and can benefit persuasion in argumentative essays. Moreover, instructors mention that they incorporate narrative in science-based writing. For examples, Shayna, who teaches a FYC class with a science theme and believes that a narrative frames better aids with audience connection that the student writer can return to throughout the writing to make their piece more engaging and personal for the reader.

The literature I examine largely speaks to narrative being pushed aside for traditional forms of academic writing, such as argumentative and analytical writing (Beaufort; Hall and Minnix). However, participants indicate that these claims are not often the case in their classrooms as narrative can function as a standalone assignment or synthesize with other types of writing assignments. The lack of transferability to other genres, or narrative as a "mutt genre," as Elizabeth Wardle describes, does not seem to be the case with the participants interviewed due to narrative interweaving well with other genres and functioning as a scaffolding device to other discipline-type writings.

Participants also reference how narrative can teach students to use personal experience as evidence. Personal experience as evidence is seen throughout the surveys, but the interviews develop the claims more fully. For example, in the interviews, participants agree that the use of personal experience can help students learn the value of incorporating evidence in an academic

argument, as well as how to use narrative to strengthen claims. James, for example, emphasizes that the diversity of personal experiences of students leads to rich conversations in their classroom that often translates to student writing.

Moreover, participants highlight the value of personal experience and how that experience can be used to build arguments or support personal claims for students in their writing. Jin shares that through a narrative writing assignment that students learn the value of a story. Jin elucidates this claim with an example of a student writing about their body image in college and learning how their stories are ground within their own experiences. Pairing the writing assignment with a personal narrative allows the student to better understand their position as a writer and help convey their emotions in a meaningful way.

The literature supports narrative as a mode that helps student learn to make claims, as well as grapple with intellectually challenging ideas, all while engaging with the pedagogies of process-writing instruction that emphasizes revision (Isaacs). Moreover, my research aligns with Caleb Corkery who argues that students must develop their “academic voices” out of the identities they bring with them to college (“Narratives and Confidence” 49). The incorporation of narrative can provide support for students to not only develop an academic voice, but to also support their claims as well.

Overall, participants reference the relationship between narrative and writing and rhetorical skills often in both the surveys and the interviews. While not surprising, the references do indicate that narrative can provide students with experience composing in a wide variety of genres and transfer skills, while gaining a better understanding of conventions and learning the value of personal experience as evidence.

Awareness of Agency

Awareness of agency is referenced often throughout the interviews as instructors explain the significance of narrative and its relationship to a student's understanding of identity while giving them a space that allows for safety and exploration. While agency is generally a broad term, and its definition varies across a wide range of disciplines, I am using agency in the sense of a student's ability to make free choices, generally within the influence or structure of facets of identity (race, gender, social class, ability, etc.). In a FYC classroom context, this definition can extend to a student's writing or through classroom discussion. In the interviews, participants often mention that narrative helps students become aware of their agency, or awareness of another's agency, where they may not have had previous knowledge of otherwise. An example of this is that a student may read a coming out story from another student and subsequently feel empowered to share a similar experience in their own writing. Participants reference awareness of agency often, second only to writing and rhetorical skills, suggesting that the role of narrative in FYC is helpful for students to better understand themselves and others through narrative writing.

In the literature narrative seems to have a crucial connection to identity and an awareness of this identity. Julie Lindquist and Bump Halbritter in their article "Documenting and Discovering Learning" argue that narrative in FYC can encourage students to better understand themselves as both learner and student by helping them find their voice (414). Carolyn Clarks maintains that through the use of stories that our identity is shaped and helps with sensemaking in the world ("Off the Beaten Path"). Even more so, personal narrative has a social dimension which is embedded within stories, myths, folklore, television shows, movies, etc., which embody and shape culture (Karl Scheibe and Frank Barrett "The Narrative as the Root Metaphor" 63). Examining narratives of cultures and groups of people can help better understand the

entanglement of people within communities as Debra Journet, Beth Boehm, and Cynthia Britt state in their text *Narrative Acts* (14). Additionally, narrative is often tied to the political (Lu) and other facets of identity, such as race, gender, social class, ability, among others.

In the interviews, participants describe how narrative is a safe and explorative genre for students to find their voice and better understand their own identities. Millie, for example, notices how students, particularly women, in her classroom enjoy the narrative genre due to the safety and exploration that allows for creative expression. Similarly, Giannis explains how a student writes a coming out story, and its connection to acceptance with their family. To both Giannis and Millie, among other participants, narrative is helpful for students to discover agency as it allows them to build courage in their writing through the sharing of their personal and vulnerable experiences. Furthermore, instructors indicate that students often write about personal or vulnerable experiences, even though the writing prompts do not explicitly ask for it. This may be, as Carr states, that English studies often has a greater connection with broader aspects of the world (“Composition, English, and the University” 438). Participants in the surveys also write about similar experiences with their students, however, not to the extent of the interviews. This seems to suggest that participants, when given the opportunity to discuss agency at length, are eager to do so. Interestingly enough, in the interviews, participants were not asked specifically about their students experiences with agency, but participants still spoke about the facets of identity often.

Participants also talk about how narrative can better help students better understand their own assumptions and work through cultural stereotypes. Shayna, for example explains how narrative helps students question the objectivity of science through reflections that focus on the lack of women represented in scientific studies and how these discussions lead to students

writing about their partners, mothers, or sisters who have had problems with the medical industry and medications. Luka similarly has students speak about the assumptions they have within their communities, and these examinations can lead to better understanding audience expectations and cultural sensitivities in writing. Both Shayna and Luka mention how students are often resistant to these examinations, and student resistance to personal writing is also frequently mentioned in both the surveys and interviews. For example, Jin claims that students are often skeptical of narrative as an academic form, which, they suggest, may be due to narrative seeming as a less valuable genre in high school. These claims are also similar to how some scholars believe narrative has less value in FYC due to the academic climate of privileging other genres such as analysis and argumentation.

While participants in the interviews share their views on how personal writing can be helpful for students, other participants talk about the problems associated with the genre. These participants and their views differ from those of whom that claim that narrative is a safe and explorative genre as they believe narrative can be too personal for a classroom setting. Kennedy and Abram caution against instructors asking students to get too personal and that personal prompts can be problematic for students who have suffered trauma or are not comfortable sharing their experiences. The literature has mixed reviews as well, as many scholars believe having students share personal stories can be problematic due to the personal and vulnerable nature of these stories (Blake Scott; Gulyas; Jacksons; Ratliff). Instructors make similar claims in the surveys and wrestle with narrative in FYC for the reasons listed above. However, participants in the interviews are not advising against personal writing; rather, they are encouraging instructors to be mindful of their prompts regarding personal topics and suggest giving multiple options for student writing prompts. I think this is a good idea because a student may feel

pressured to share a personal story because other students are, despite them not willing or being ready to do so. As a result, instructors should be mindful of prompts, or possibly give multiple prompts for students to choose from, which would allow for more student choice and agency.

The “WPA Outcomes Statement” does not mention agency, personal writing, identity, or any similar terms; however, the statement does speak to how FYC should teach students critical thinking skills and contain process writing, which includes reflection writing. As shown through my data, students discovering and discussing elements of agency seems to be complementary to FYC, despite not being an outright objective proposed by the “WPA Outcomes Statement.” Moreover, instructors mention awareness of agency often in the interviews, although they were not directly asked about the topic. The discussion of agency by instructors at length shows the importance and timeliness of identity and its relationship to narrative in FYC classrooms.

Course Objectives

In the interviews, participants reference course objectives often, despite not being asked directly about course objectives, and describe how narrative helps them meet, or sometimes not meet, course objectives. Course objectives vary by institution, institution type, and even classroom sections, but, overall, appear similar in nature. For example, participants from a large R1 university describe their objectives as: analyzing, composing, and reflection within various academic contexts and an emphasis on supporting claims with primary and secondary sources. Similarly, participants from a small LA college describe course outcomes as: knowledge of the expectation of academic writing including revision within the writing process and persuasive writing. Other institutions speak to articulation of an argument, ethical documentation, and control of syntax and mechanics. Of course, outcomes statements are not universal and may align or differ between different institutions.

In the “WPA Outcomes Statement” the authors articulate that the outcomes or objectives that largely represent FYC are rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, reading, and composing, and processes, which includes knowledge of conventions such as mechanics, usage, spelling, and citation practices. Moreover, by the end of FYC, students should understand genre conventions, linguistic structures, explore the concepts of intellectual property, and apply citation conventions in their own work, among other skills. It is important to note that the “WPA Outcomes Statement” claims that their compilation of objectives is not a standard, nor is it universal, and objectives vary by institution.

Many participants believe that narrative is useful for meeting the course objectives of rhetorical functions. Participants like Shayna speak to how narrative can help students better understand context, while Victor claims that narrative is useful for teaching students the concept of transfer and applying that skill in other assignments and classes. Riley believes that narrative can help to “undo everything that’s been done to them” from primary education and Juan speaks somewhat similarly to Riley but focuses more on helping students write for an audience. Other instructors make similar claims and share how narrative is helpful for students to better understand genre conventions and engage in the writing process. Participants do not mention the relationship between narrative and mechanics, usage, spelling, or citation practices, although, as shown earlier, participants do believe that narrative helps students learn how to support claims with personal evidence.

While most participants claim that narrative is helpful for meeting course objectives, other instructors say that it is often not incorporated well in FYC. Hunter thinks that narrative has an important role in FYC, but has not really seen it incorporated well, while Sam maintains that instructors aren’t really taught how to incorporate narrative in their classrooms, describing

how the narrative assignment seems tacked on at the beginning of the semester. Other participants like Luka says that narrative isn't really appealing to students that are not English majors, so other strategies are needed to show the value of narrative in FYC and better relate it to institutional and course objectives. These comments are interesting to me because even though instructors are incorporating narrative, they are not too sure if the genre is effective for meeting FYC objectives. These remarks by participants are similar to the comments on the WPA-L that suggest narrative is perhaps out of vogue or in need of an upgrade to be more effective in FYC. These remarks also align with Goldblatt who claims that personal writing is often associated with expressivist concepts that are sometimes regarded as relics of the past due to the current pedagogical climate that values writing instruction as professional preparation.

Pedagogical Goals

Participants often reference pedagogical goals in relation to course objectives within the interviews, despite not being asked about their pedagogical goals. Even more so, participants reference pedagogical goals the same frequency as course objectives (both 20 times by 13 participants). This similarity could be because pedagogical goals often help instructors reach course objectives, linking the two together. For example, a course objective may be having students cite primary sources effectively, and the pedagogical goal to reach this objective may be increasing student engagement during source material exercises. However, pedagogical goals can differ from course objectives as instructors may want to focus on content that they find personally meaningful. An example of this could be an instructor that is personally invested in climate change has students read articles on the topic, even though the course is not related to environmental writing.

The "WPA Outcomes Statement" does not provide pedagogical goals for instructors to reach course objectives but does give faculty advice on how to help students learn conventions in

their field, documentation and dissemination of material, and reasoning behind intellectual property issues. Narrative does not seem to relate to these “WPA Outcomes Statement” suggestions.

In the literature, narrative is seen as a helpful tool for instructors to reach pedagogical goals. Robert Nash claims that narrative writing gives students the opportunity to better understand moral imaginations, which can result in better self-insights (3). These self-insights can then lead to accomplishing various course objectives. Lindquist and Halbritter argue that the incorporation of a narrative helps facilitate a transition to college writing by providing students with familiar rhetorical principles (418), while J. Blake Scott believes narrative can validate students as writers (112). Caleb Corkery speaks similarly, claiming that a narrative helps students develop an academic voice, which they can develop during the class and use throughout college (49).

Instructors reference a myriad of pedagogical goals throughout the interviews. One particular goal that instructors frequently share is getting students to talk about, or better understand, their own research. Instructors often do this in innovative ways that incorporate narrative. For example, Pearl incorporates a poster session that functions as a peer review and Eli brings in a professional storyteller to show the value of personal experience. Both of these instructors use narrative in a fun way that helps students to better meet pedagogical goals and reach course objectives. Other participants set personal goals to make their narrative assignments clearer and more straightforward to help aid with comprehension and clarity. Some participants also mention pedagogical goals to give students more freedom in their writing and to get students to think more critically about issues such as race, gender, sexuality, and social class.

Pedagogical goals vary in the interviews, but they seem to mostly align with the literature, although there are differences due to personal choice. The majority of participants that speak about pedagogical goals believe narrative can help them reach these goals. This is interesting as it differs from course objectives where there are mixed reviews about whether or not narrative is helpful for meeting course objectives. Moreover, despite pedagogical goals and course objectives being similar and often aligning, it is surprising that narrative seems more effective for reaching pedagogical goals than course objectives. This difference could be due to the participant preference of the narrative genre that conflicts with the academy pushing away from expressivist genres, which leaves narrative and personal writing largely out of institutional objectives in FYC.

Community Building

Another theme that appears frequently throughout the interviews is the concept of community building and its relationship with narrative and how narrative is helpful for building community inside and outside of the classroom. The theme of community building is the most surprising to me because, much like awareness of agency, instructors were in no way asked about community building in the interviews, but it was still a frequent reference. Moreover, community building is not often a main point in the literature, and there is no mention of it in the “WPA Outcomes Statement,” so the continuous references in the interviews suggest that building and fostering community in FYC is a common practice with instructors.

Participants that reference community building claim that the incorporation of narrative allows their classes to form a community inside, and outside, the classroom. In the surveys, participants mention writing communities, but not to the same extent as the interviews. Moreover, and similarly to the theme of awareness of agency, community building is not a traditional objective or outcome of FYC, at least in relation to the “WPA Outcomes Statement.”

In fact, the “WPA Outcomes Statement” does not mention community, community building, or any variation of the subject. This leads me to believe that community building in FYC is not the norm in practice, research, and theory.

Even more so, the literature looks at community paired with narrative, but largely not in relation to student writers. For example, Min-Zhan Lu argues that narratives can aid in a political community (“Reading the Personal”) and David Carr speaks similarly to Lu, in his text *Time, Narrative, and History* that narrative shapes communal identity. Caleb Corkery, however, does write that narrative in FYC can help empower students in a “linguistic community, “which can make them more confident writers (“Narratives and Confidence Building” 49). Conversely, a contributor to the WPA-L narrative debate says that personal narratives can force students into communities, but the comment is more pejorative than positive.

However, my data suggests that community building plays a vital role in FYC, despite the “WPA Outcomes Statement” and the literature largely ignoring the concept. As mentioned above, the “WPA Outcomes Statement” is not an objective document and cannot possibly contain all objectives and outcomes that instructors value. However, not including community building may be a limitation of the “WPA Outcomes Statement” as the instructors in my study strongly speak to the relationship between community building and its role in FYC. Participants argue that narrative is helpful for building community in the classroom through peer interaction and bonding, sharing ideas, and growing as learners, which can all lead to fostering a community. Angelo and Kennedy, for example, both speak to how the vulnerability of the genre can lead to developing a sense of community through a shared experience. Angelo’s example of a student who did not have a library in their high school transitions to a touching discussion of the importance of access to materials, which leads to community building and examining one’s

own assumptions in their classroom. Other participants mention how students talk and write about learning disabilities in their narratives, which can lead to a shared understanding of experience.

Participants also express how narrative can create community outside of the classroom. For example, James talks about how narrative allows for compelling analysis of students' own communities through critical reflection, while Hunter describes how their narrative assignments, which is an interview with people in the workforce, leads students to letters of recommendation and interviews. Bri also talks about community building but explains that narrative helps build community within students' families and forms a stronger familial community. Narrative not only functions as a classroom community building exercise, but my data shows that its benefits go far beyond the FYC classroom. A reconceptualized thinking of FYC may benefit by a stronger incorporation of community due to the benefits outlined above.

Summary

This section has examined the prominent themes of the interviews, which include writing skills and rhetorical skills, awareness of agency, course objectives, pedagogical goals, and community building. These themes were the most salient ones that emerged through the interviews. Much like the surveys, I anticipated writing skills and rhetorical skills to be talked about often by participants due to the relationship between these skills and FYC and how the literature speaks to them prolifically. Moreover, it was not surprising to see how narrative can help instructors reach course objectives or pedagogical goals. It was surprising, however, that institutional course objectives tend to view narrative as less valuable than other academic genres, while pedagogical goals seem to align more favorably with narrative. What I make of this is that instructors seem to find value in narrative while institutional objectives tend to align less with the genre. I will examine this juxtaposition in the next session more fully.

It was also interesting to me that awareness of agency and community building were talked about often in the interviews despite participants not being asked directly about the topics. This leads me to believe that narrative has a connection with critical concepts that should be examined more fully in future studies as there seems to be a strong link between narrative and these concepts and the benefits to students should not be ignored.

A Reconceptualized Critical Theory of Power

The sections above examine RQ1 of my study. This section will examine the summary of results and interpretations of the data to further explore RQ2 and apply a critical lens to the data for interpretation as this study is largely concerned with FYC and critical concepts of power. I will begin by introducing Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren's "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research" and argue for a reconceptualized critical theory through three concepts of power: hegemony, ideology, and linguistic/discursive power. I will then explore these concepts in relation to dominant knowledge production and then apply these theoretical concepts to the surveys and interviews and suggest a critical unearthing in the FYC classroom.

In "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research" critical theorists Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren argue for a reconceptualized critical theory due to there being many critical theories, the disagreement among critical theorists, and the constant changing and evolving of the critical tradition (287). They argue that due to the social and technological changes, and new forms of information production and access, that critical theorists need new ways of researching and analyzing the constructions of individuals. While critical theorists may examine issues of power and social justice in relation to race, class, gender, among other facets of identity, Kincheloe and McLaren believe that researchers should also examine the way these factors work within education and social institutions to construct a social system that raises questions and strategies for exploring it (288).

A reconceptualized critical theory is one that examines theories of power as it operates to dominate and shape consciousness. According to Kincheloe and McLaren, power is an ambiguous term that demands a detailed study and analysis: “A consensus seems to be emerging among criticalists that power is a basic constituent of human existence that works to shape the oppressive and productive nature of the human tradition. Indeed, we are all empowered and we are all unempowered” (290). In their article, Kincheloe and McLaren give three reconceptualized critical theories of power: hegemony, ideology, and linguistic/discursive power. I will now explain each reconceptualized power in a bit more detail.

The first reconceptualized theory of power evoked by Kincheloe and McLaren is hegemony. In the Gramscian sense, hegemony is understood as a dominant power that is not always exercised by physical force, but also through social psychological attempts to win consent through cultural institutions such as the media, family, the church, and institutions like schools (290). More simply put, hegemony is a set of social relations that are legitimized by their depiction as natural and inevitable. For example, a heteronormative love story can be interpreted as a continuum to reaffirm and perpetuate the current hegemony of heteronormativity as the natural state of sexuality. To Kincheloe and McLaren, critical researchers note that hegemonic consent is fluid and is always being contested by various groups with different agendas (290).

The formulation of hegemony cannot be separated from the production of ideology (291). According to Kincheloe and McLaren, if hegemony is the larger effort of the powerful to win the consent of their subordinates, then ideology “involves the cultural forms, the meanings, the rituals, and the representations that produce consent to the status quo and individuals’ particular place within it” (291). To Kincheloe and McLaren, dominant ideological forces and practices

shape our vision of reality (291). Understanding domination in the context of struggles among different classes, races, and gender groups, among others, provides critical researchers of ideology to explore the ways in such competitions engage different visions, interests, and agenda in a variety of social dominants (291). Ideology, then, is a medium in which social actors make sense of their world in relation to the dominant power structures. To sum up, ideology is the system of ideas forming the basis of different ideas between groups while hegemony is the relationship of power between the different groups.

The third concept of power that Kincheloe and McLaren argue is central to a reconceptualized critical theory is that of linguistic/discursive power. Kincheloe and McLaren claim that language is not a mirror of society; rather, it is an “unstable social practice whose meaning shifts, depending upon the context in which it is used” (291). As such, language is not a neutral or objective conduit of description, but a perspective in which the world is constructed. As a result, language and discourse also function as a form of regulation and domination. For example, Kincheloe and McLaren state: “discursive practices are defined as a set of tacit rules that regulate what can and cannot be said, who can speak with the blessings of authority, and who must listen, whose social constructions are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant” (291). In an educational context, discourse of power tells educators what textbooks are to be read by students, what languages students should write in, and what instructional methods are most effective. These beliefs establish a hegemonic and ideological message to impose power dynamics.

With a better understanding of hegemony, ideology, and linguistic/discursive power, I now turn to my data to interpret the research with the critical lens from the perspective of Kincheloe and McLaren and seek to answer RQ2.

Destabilize Dominant Knowledge Production

Destabilizing dominant knowledge production is a core attribute of critical theory that focuses on the relationships among culture, power, and domination and how these relationships can help unearth power structures within society. According to Kincheloe and McLaren, knowledge production is derived from the cultural production: “Popular culture, with its TV, movies, video games, computers, music, dance, and other productions, plays an increasingly important role in critical research on power and dominance” (292). Moreover, cultural production is often a form of education, as it generates knowledge and shapes values. In particular, schools are institutions where forms of knowledge, values, and social relations are taught and cultivated. Investigating how narrative aids in destabilizing dominant knowledge production in FYC is a chief concern of this study.

In the surveys, participants discuss the relationship between narrative and destabilizing dominant knowledge production. These results come most often in Q4, which asks the participant directly: To what extent does the assignment or reading explore or destabilize dominant knowledge productions such as race, ability, gender identity, class, etc.? The most common theme that emerges from this question is exploring dominant modes of knowledge such as race, ethnicity, or national origin, where most participants claim that they try to incorporate authors of color to use as models of narrative writing. Some of the reasons are to give a diversity of readings and to have critical conversations about the status quo, and to explore nondominant identities. By doing so, instructors are resisting hegemony of the canon of white authorship, and consequently, shape a more inclusive academic discourse.

While most participants that reference race, ethnicity, or national origin provide the readings and assignments to students, some claims are made that student explore these facets of identities with race, ethnicity, or national origin in their own narratives, without being asked to

write about these experiences. For example, an instructor claims that they assign a narrative that asks students to “write about a time where they felt like they had no voice or they experienced a moment of adversity,” and that students will often write about race. Other participants speak to how students write narratives tied to biracial identities.

I find that students choosing to write about their identities, despite not being asked to, interesting as they are working through the hegemony with their narratives as ideology. Narrative seems inextricably linked with hegemony and ideology, and students are using narrative as a way to work through and make sense of their position in the world in relation to dominant power structures. This leads me to believe that students largely want to share their stories, despite how personal they may be, as storytelling is a way for students to work through their own understanding of these stories in relation to their position in the world.

While participants reference a wide range of dominant knowledge production, it is surprising to me that the results indicate that personal experience or expression is the second most discussed theme for Q4 as it is not necessarily a dominant mode of production. However, participants do note that personal experience or expression is dictated by student choice, which can explore a dominant mode of production. This is similar to above, where students are incorporating their ideologies through personal experience to interact with hegemony. For example, an instructor states that “The extent to which this assignment explores or destabilizes a dominant knowledge product depends on the student and how they respond to the assignment.” Another instructor speaks similarly to this comment, noting that narrative is helpful for students to pursue a topic or experience that have impacted their lives in some way and “hopefully challenging, or at least reconsidering that knowledge.” Similar responses from participants are also seen through students trying to better understand their traumas, disabilities, body images,

gender identities, toxic masculinity, and sexualities, as told throughout the surveys. Again, the reoccurring theme of students exploring topics of dominant knowledge production without the assignment prompts not explicitly asking the student to explore these avenues shows the narrative genre can be a safe and exploratory space for students to reflect on themselves and their position within society.

In the interviews, participants also discuss how narrative aids in destabilizing dominant knowledge production. This is interesting because, unlike in the surveys, participants were not asked questions about dominant knowledge production, but half of the participants reference the relationship between narrative and dominant knowledge production regardless. Because of the qualitative nature of interviews, instructors speak more frequently about this topic, and to greater extent. For example, Imani shares how they incorporate counter stories in their classroom to help express different modes of knowledge to students, but Imani's incorporation also serves as a linguistic/discursive power to resist standardization and to show students different types of dialects are acceptable in academia. Other participants share how narrative writing is often beneficial for women and other minorities due to the power of storytelling, which has been essential to community building and knowledge sharing. This shows an ideological resistance to traditional masculine modes of discourse that tend to be championed in academia.

In both the surveys and interviews, instructors explain that they sometimes meet resistance to discussions of facets of identity. For example, Malik says that they often avoid bringing up the topic of gender in classroom discussion as it leads to arguments in class. Shayna makes the same comment, but with trans identities. Additional instances of these resistances are seen throughout both the surveys and interviews, usually in relation to topics of gender

inequalities and trans and queer identities. This is mostly likely due to the topics being seen as contentious to students.

A critical philosophy often maintains that self-criticism leads to an understanding of self in order to criticize the ideological frames to make sense of the world (Kincheloe and McLaren 296). However, students, like all people, have points of views, beliefs, orientations, and social and political groups, which they already identify (297). Even more so, students are often entangled in many aspects of the ideological process due to multiple ideologies that come from institutions, friends, family, instructors, clubs, and other organizations. Students that have power may promote ideologies of power or be resistant to particular ideologies that are less dominant. One instructor that was interviewed commented that sometimes the resistance goes as far as students feeling as if they are committing a betrayal against their beliefs when critiquing their own ideology.

Despite the resistance, however, participants believe narrative is helpful for obviating classroom arguments, as it leads to students telling stories and sharing their own experiences, rather than participating in what seems like a classroom debate where students need to defend their beliefs. Narrative, then, can help students both analyze and dissect the ways people connect their everyday experiences to their ideologies, in hopes of better understanding different representations and self-biases.

Critical Unearthing the First-Year Composition Classroom

As mentioned above, the university is not exempt from exhibiting hegemony, ideology, and linguistic/discursive power. Even more so, the first-year composition classroom often bears the brunt of budget deficits and cut classes, and composition teachers are expected to enact a “shared sacrifice,” which causes them to teach larger class sizes, deal with staff cuts, and experience wage freezes, all for the good of the university (Tony Scott and Nancy Welch 7).

These shared sacrifices ultimately impact writing students with foundational changes in curriculum and pedagogies and the value of a college degree as well as what it signifies (10). Even more so, Kincheloe and McLaren indicate that classrooms contain a “political unconscious” that lurks beneath the surface of everyday classroom life. This lurking may seem as if it is unrelated to practices of race, class, and gender oppression, but is ultimately connected to it (301).

Within the surveys and interviews, it became clear that instructors are frustrated with the hegemony of the university and the impact this hegemony has on their FYC classrooms. The perpetuated ideology that narrative is a less desirable genre to students is talked about by many participants. Instructors spoke often of how students are resistant to personal narrative because narrative is perceived as a less desirable genre in academic writing. One particular participant who works in a STEM college, who teaches primarily health sciences students, claims that their students “just don’t understand the point of the assignment because they came here to study anatomy and physiology.” Another instructor points out that students often claim they are in an English class, not a social justice class, while other participants aver that narrative is difficult for students in FYC because it differs from the formal 5-paragraph essays most high school students are trained to make. A critical interpretation would suggest that students do not value the narrative assignment because of institutional influence that champions other type of academic writing genres like argumentation and analysis. Even more so students may not recognize the value of narrative due to them not believing the genre has value in their respective fields.

While instructors speak of student resistance to narrative, they also discuss how their departments resist the genre. For example, a survey participant claims that narratives are useful for their pedagogical practice but find themselves often struggling against a department where

narratives are seen as an inferior genre due to their expressionistic composition. Another participant makes a similar statement, stating that students don't find the value of narrative as the assignment is usually tacked on at the beginning of a course by English departments, only to have students never return to the genre again. As one WPA claims: "We start with the narrative assignment to ease students into college writing and then we get into the more serious academic work."

Narrative being pushed aside as a department choice reflects an uncomfortable standardization and lack of autonomy for instructors of FYC. Many participants state that they want to incorporate more narrative assignments or activities, but the department's philosophy to standardize curriculum does not allow them to do so. Millie goes on to say that departments say that they give instructors autonomy with course readings and activities, but the privileging of some work in the classroom being more serious than others is apparent through the standardized department rubrics of the assignment: "The narrative assignment isn't even graded—how can students even take the assignment seriously?" Other participants express frustration as standardization of course textbooks by publishing companies often forego including narratives in the readers. Course standardization through syllabi or assignments may be reflective of positivism and standardization may refer to an incursion on academic freedom and restrict instructor autonomy. While standardization does have its benefits, it is clear that instructors in this study seek more autonomy in their teaching practices.

A critical unearthing reveals instructors frustration with institutions and departments; however, all instructors that participated in interviews do indicate that students can write their narrative assignment in non-standardized English, or, the student's "own language." Some instructors claim they would allow students to write in their own language, but it depends on the

purpose of the assignment and the audience, while others mention that language variation and code meshing / switching is a natural part of dialect and language and therefore should not be chastised. For this reason, instructors often use narrative to critique standardized English, and to help students better learn about genre, audience, and purpose. One participant succinctly states: “Standardized English is not the endpoint of communication,” and believes that even though departments and classroom objectives may champion mechanics and good grammar, that these are lower order concerns that institutions seem to be focusing less on.

Instructors allowing students to write in their own language can be interpreted as a push away from the linguistic/discursive power of institutions and English departments that promote standardized English and critique grammatical errors and mechanics. Course descriptions, objectives, and outcomes that focus on grammar and champion argumentation may reflect hegemony (Kincheloe and McLaren), but the interview results overwhelmingly do not support a linguistic/discursive power with narrative writing and students.

Summary

This section has examined Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren’s “Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research” and has explored issues of power such as hegemony, ideology, and linguistic/discursive power and their impact on dominant knowledge production. I then applied a critical unearthing to the FYC classroom by exploring the frustration that instructors have with the hegemony of the university and FYC classroom and the institutional resistance to narrative. Moreover, it is clear that instructors are unhappy with standardization of the FYC classroom and the lack of autonomy with assignment and textbook selection. However, instructors tend to resist departmental and intuitional standards and are eager to challenge linguistic/discursive power by resisting standardized English by allowing students to write in their own language.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the use of narrative in FYC and the extent to which it destabilizes dominant knowledge production by asking the following research questions:

- RQ1: How, and for what purposes, are instructors using narratives in FYC?
- RQ2: Based on the results of RQ1, are instructors using narrative in FYC to destabilize the dominant knowledge production?

In regards to RQ1, there are many answers to this question. There is also no “right” or “wrong” answer to this question. However, my research and data indicate that narrative is being used in FYC for a myriad of reasons. Narrative provides a benefit to improving writing and rhetorical skills—including the concept of transfer which is disputed in the literature—and is often used as an exemplar for model and style for what participants constitute as “good writing.” Additionally, instructors often speak of the value that they find in narrative and are eager to learn new ways to incorporate the genre in their classrooms but are often unsure how to do so.

Outside of improving writing and rhetorical skills, participants speak at length about narrative and destabilizing dominant knowledge production even when not prompted to do so. This is interesting to me because participants often connect narrative and facets of identity and are eager to explore and resist dominant modes of production in their classrooms. Awareness of agency and community building are also referenced often, even though these themes are not explored much in the literature or generally associated with institutional or course objectives of FYC. What is most surprising to me is that participants were not asked about awareness of agency or community building directly in the surveys or interviews, but the concepts are still common themes. This leads me to believe that a reconceptualized curriculum of FYC may

benefit from incorporating new elements such as awareness of agency and community building even though these themes are typically not associated with college writing.

Specifically, the surveys show that instructors are using narrative to help students gain writing skills and rhetorical skills, and the purpose of narrative functions as a starting point or springboard to other assignments. Moreover, instructors are using narrative to help students better understand the personal aspect of writing, which is a broad term that instructors use that can indicate getting to know students better or for students to better understand themselves as writers. Lesser reoccurring themes throughout the surveys include narrative's incorporation to aid in transfer, reflection, critical thinking, and personal experience as evidence, among others.

In the interviews, the more prominent themes that emerged and were interwoven throughout the questions are writing skills and rhetorical skills, awareness of agency, pedagogical goals, course objectives, and community building. Participants in the interviews were eager to speak to how they incorporate narrative in their classrooms to help students better understand conventions of academic writing and learning the value of personal experience as evidence. Moreover, participants spoke at length about the relationship between narrative and destabilizing dominant knowledge production despite not being directly asked the two, which is a surprising discovery. The major similarities between the surveys and interviews are participants referencing writing skills and rhetorical skills and elements of the personal writing in FYC. Additional similarities include awareness of agency and students better understanding their own identities through their writing.

In regards to RQ2, I was more surprised by this answer because I assumed that instructors would be using narrative to destabilize dominant knowledge production due to my exploration of the literature and the connection to narrative and critical theory, but I did not expect this to

happen to the extent that instructors are doing so. This means that instructors of FYC are doing more engagement with critical concepts than expected. The data suggests, yes, instructors are using narrative to destabilize dominant knowledge production. In the surveys, participants were explicitly asked how their incorporation of narrative destabilizes dominant knowledge production, which led to an abundance of data. However, in the interviews, instructors were not asked about narrative and destabilizing dominant knowledge production, but it still emerges as a major theme and participants spoke extensively about the topic. Even more so, it seems that instructors are using narrative to destabilize dominant knowledge production, perhaps even unknowingly, through the themes of the personal, awareness of agency, and community building, despite their assignment prompts not speaking to the topic. These topics were expressed by many instructors and most felt strongly about them.

Implications for Rhetoric and Composition

This study contributes to the field of rhetoric and composition by providing data synthesized from FYC instructors from a wide variety of demographics and institution sizes and types across the midwestern US. After analysis and interpretation, this study highlights the purpose of narrative in FYC from the perspective of the instructor. WPAs can use this research to better understand and incorporate narrative in their departments, programs, and classrooms, and to make an informed decision on whether or not the narrative genre may be useful to meet course objectives or pedagogical goals. Instructors of FYC can use the results and interpretations from this study to form a more critical and complex pedagogy of narrative within their own departments and classrooms and to help reach pedagogical goals and course objectives, among other purposes. For example, one may look at the section of community building and consequently add elements from this study to form a stronger commitment to student community in their classroom. Departments, WPAs, and instructors that are interested in the critical aspects

and destabilizing dominant knowledge production can use this research to glean new insights on narrative and its impact on instructors, students, and FYC classrooms. Moreover, departments that want to examine how dominant knowledge production, ideology, hegemony, and discursive/linguistic power operate within FYC may take an interest in this study. While I do not have particular assignments or activities for instructors to incorporate in their pedagogies, exploring these options can be a future area of research for interested scholars.

Implications for Critical Theory

This study contributes to the field of critical theory by providing data synthesized from FYC instructors and to the extent to which narrative is being used to destabilize dominant knowledge production as knowledge production is a core tenet of critical theory. Critical theorists conduct research in a wide variety of fields that range from the hard sciences to the humanities. Critical theorists often work within the humanities and social sciences and this research helps show narrative as a subtly persuasive tool to help form some legitimacy for present actions and beliefs. Critical theorists and researchers that have an interest in English studies or the humanities—and reconceptualized forms of power such as hegemony, ideology, and discursive/linguistic power—can use this research to better examine how English studies connects students and educators with broader aspects of the world. Researchers that are interested in investigating how narrative works critically can reference this dissertation to show how writing courses can be a significant space to explore not only dominant knowledge production, but other facets of identity. Moreover, critical researchers may find this research beneficial to better understand how qualitative research methodologies intersects with critical methods to make sense of the complex meaning making process of an individual's own identity, culture, political community, and language.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations and opportunities for future research that emerged from this study. One limitation of this dissertation is that I only examined institutions within the Midwest region of the United States. As previously stated, I chose this region because of my familiarity with the educational systems and because I have lived in Wisconsin and Iowa and attended universities in both states. However, the instructors' use of narrative could be different across various regions and institutions in the United States. My study is not meant to make generalizations about the data, but, rather, to share the experiences of the instructors surveyed and interviewed.

This dissertation also began at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made me uneasy and anxious to collect data. Because of COVID-19, some institutions would not distribute my survey as they did not want to put additional burdens on their instructors who were already overwhelmed due to the beginning of the pandemic. Moreover, due to IRB stipulations, I could not have face-to-face interviews, nor could I work with my coding team in a traditional setting. As a result, data collection, coding, and analysis had to be conducted over telephone and teleconferences, which I feel took more time due to having to reschedule often because of the pandemic and a lack of productivity over teleconference with three student coders. However, in the end, everything came together.

I am pleased and humbled by the generosity of participants who took my survey and agreed to subsequent interviews. I feel like I received a good variety of different institutions in my sample, but R1 universities largely made up my sample, due to their size. I would have liked to receive data from CCs and more LA colleges and STEM schools. Additional research can be done at other institutions for those of whom that are interested in pursuing this research further.

If I could do things differently, I would change some of the interview protocol questions to make them more focused for my study. I also feel as if I had too much data at times, and, due to the pandemic, I often felt overwhelmed. I think I could have split this dissertation into two separate projects (one that examines strictly the use of narratives and its purpose in FYC and another that solely looks at how narratives destabilize dominant knowledge production). Collecting, transcribing, coding, and analyzing all the data took a very long time, even with three student coders aiding me in the process.

I will continue to explore the research questions surrounding my dissertation with other critical exercises and theoretical applications in writing classrooms. I plan to conduct a study that examines narratives written by students in FYC and how the stories students share relate to their identity, culture, political community, and language. While most of the current research supports the use of literacy narrative as an important part of a curriculum for FYC, I am interested in examining other forms of student narrative to glean new and additional insights for student learning and writing pedagogies. I believe that storytelling is a valuable resource in FYC that has yet to be fully realized, which requires more research to highlight its importance. Researchers can also participate in similar projects that look at student examples of narrative rather than gathering data from the perspective of the instructor. Another interesting avenue of exploration would be to interview WPAs and other faculty that have influence on curriculum to see how narrative is being used programmatically.

Another project I have planned that is related to qualitative research methodologies is to interview nonbinary and nongender conforming members of the LGBTQ community to better examine their identity formation and societal perception through the narratives they tell. The literature surrounding individuals who identify outside of the traditional gender binary is

underdeveloped so additional research is needed to help destabilize a social norm of a traditional gender binary.

Wrapping Up

This dissertation has examined the purpose of narrative in FYC and its relation to destabilizing dominant knowledge production. In Chapter 1, I outlined the purpose and rationale for my project. I showed how narrative is incorporated in FYC and how the issue is often contentious due to narrative being “out of vogue” and in need of an update, as outlined through the WPA-listserv. I then examined the relationship between narrative and that of identity, and how narrative may be used to destabilize dominant knowledge production. I also shared broader implications of my project and provide my research questions and a brief introduction to my methodology for answering these research questions. Chapter 2 of the dissertation provided an extensive review of literature done by scholars of composition, rhetoric, and critical theory. In Chapter 3 I explored the methods that I used to answer my research questions, along with the critical grounded theoretical approach I applied to analyze the data. Chapter 4 reported the results and Chapter 5 provided a discussion of the results with a theoretical application of critical grounded theory, specifically through the lens of a critical unearthing.

Results of this qualitative study support narrative reading and writing assignments as important pedagogical tools in the FYC classroom, chiefly through the meeting of course objectives and pedagogical goals, as well as providing students with additional rhetorical and writing skills. My results also suggest that narrative is often used in a critical way by aiding students with an increased awareness of agency and providing them with community building inside and outside of the classroom and personal writing has a large impact on students. This dissertation also notices the role of power that lurks within the FYC classroom, primarily through examples of hegemony, ideology, and discursive/linguistic power.

To return to the conversation of whether or not the use of a narrative in FYC is out of vogue or dead, I definitely say no. This is based on the information that is shared by instructors that attest and speak to the importance of narrative in FYC. However, I believe that narrative is in need of an upgrade or revision to better suit the objectives and outcomes of FYC, or that the objectives and outcomes of FYC need an upgrade or revision to better suit the needs of instructors and students. Instructors are clearly frustrated with the current system and believe narrative has much more value than how institutions often view and incorporate the genre. As my dissertation shows, narrative is helpful for improving the writing skills and rhetorical skills of students. However, the more critical aspects explored in this study such as destabilizing dominant knowledge production, awareness of agency, and community building, should not be ignored. I believe that thinking about narrative and its relationship to the critical can form a stronger reconceptualized version of FYC that not only benefits instructors for meeting course objectives and pedagogical goals, but also encourages students and instructors to think about narrative in ways we have not originally imagined.

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APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL LETTER

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202
Ames, Iowa 50014
515 294-4566

Date: 03/27/2020

To: Daniel Henke Charles Kostelnick

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: (Re)Imagining the Critical through Narrative:
Working through the Hegemony and Ideology with Critical Methods and Pedagogies in First-Year
Composition

IRB ID: 20-128

Submission Type: Initial Submission **Exemption Date:** 03/27/2020

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from most requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.104 or 21 CFR 56.104 because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

2018 - 2 (ii): Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) when any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- You do not need to submit an application for continuing review. Instead, you will receive a request for a brief status update every three years. The status update is intended to verify that the study is still ongoing.
- You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application. Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any *modifications to the research procedures* (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, nature or duration of behavioral interventions, use of deception, etc.), any change in *privacy or confidentiality protections*, modifications that result in the *inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations*, removing plans for informing participants about the study, any *change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants*, and/or any change such that the revised procedures do not fall into one or more of the [regulatory exemption categories](#). The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.
- All *changes to key personnel* must receive prior approval.

- Promptly inform the IRB of any addition of or change in federal funding for this study. Approval of the protocol referenced above applies only to funding sources that are specifically identified in the corresponding IRB application.

Detailed information about requirements for submitting modifications for exempt research can be found on our [website](#). For modifications that require prior approval, an amendment to the most recent IRB application must be submitted in IRBManager. A determination of exemption or approval from the IRB must be granted before implementing the proposed changes.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

Additionally:

- All research involving human participants must be submitted for IRB review. Only the IRB or its designees may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.
- Please inform the IRB if the Principal Investigator and/or Supervising Investigator end their role or involvement with the project with sufficient time to allow an alternate PI/Supervising Investigator to assume oversight responsibility. Projects must have an [eligible PI](#) to remain open.
- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected [adverse experiences](#) involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other [unanticipated problems](#) involving risks to subjects or others.
- Approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.
- Your research study may be subject to [post-approval monitoring](#) by Iowa State University's Office for Responsible Research. In some cases, it may also be subject to formal audit or inspection by federal agencies and study sponsors.
- Upon completion of the project, transfer of IRB oversight to another IRB, or departure of the PI and/or Supervising Investigator, please initiate a Project Closure in IRBManager to officially close the project. For information on instances when a study may be closed, please refer to the [IRB Study Closure Policy](#).

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of narrative in FYC. In order to participate, you must meet the following criteria:

1. You must be an instructor at an institution.
2. You must be currently teaching at least 1 section of FYC or have taught at least 1 section in the last academic year (Fall of 2019 or Spring of 2019).
3. You must include either a narrative reading or narrative writing assignment in your FYC class.

The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision as to whether or not you would like to participate in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Daniel Henke. Your participation is completely voluntary. You will be asked to complete a survey of five open-ended questions, followed by a short demographic section. Participation in the survey will require 10-20 minutes of your time.

At the end of the survey you will be asked whether or not you would like to participate in a follow-up interview at a later date regarding your experience with narrative in FYC. In the interview you will respond to open-ended questions asking about your perceptions of narrative in FYC. Participation in this interview will require 15-30 minutes of your time. You may choose not to answer any question(s). You will be free to stop participating at any time.

Possible benefits to you include: an opportunity to aid in a greater understanding and awareness of the use of narrative in FYC. The content of the questionnaire should cause you no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. In order to protect your safety as a participant the following steps will be taken: (1) you are free to leave the study or decline participation in the study at any point during the process, (2) no identifying information about you will be included in the final research report.

In addition to my dissertation, the results of the study may be published in academic journals or presented at professional conferences but will not reveal the identity of the participants. Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable laws and regulations. Federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the ISU Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies with human subjects) may inspect and/or copy records for quality assurance and analysis.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate before or during the study. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the primary researcher, Daniel Henke, at (XXX)-XXX-XXXX or email at: dhenke@iastate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board: (515) 294-4215.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the researcher and Iowa State University.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this study. Completing the survey certifies your willingness to participate and that you meet the above requirements. Upon request, you will be provided a copy of this consent form for your records.

Daniel Henke, PhD Candidate, Iowa State University

Email: dhenke@iastate.edu

Charlie Kostelnick, Professor, Iowa State University

Email: chkostel@iastate.edu

APPENDIX C. EMAIL FOR DATA COLLECTION

Dear,

My name is Daniel Henke and I am currently a PhD candidate in the Rhetoric and Professional Communication program at Iowa State University. My research interests include narrative theory, critical theory / cultural rhetorics, and writing pedagogies.

The purpose of my email is to gather data for my dissertation. The purpose of my study is to examine the use of narrative in first-year composition (FYC), and whether or not narrative is being used to destabilize dominant modes of knowledge production.

In this IRB approved study, I am looking for instructors of FYC to complete a short open-ended survey of five questions along with a demographic survey. Participation in this survey should only take about 10-20 minutes. An opportunity for a follow-up interview is available as well. Participants who are interested can indicate at the end of the survey.

All names, pronouns, institutions, and any other identifiers will be removed from all materials collected in order for the study to remain anonymous.

I am hoping you can please share this survey with instructors that might be interested and meet the following criteria:

1. You must be an instructor at an institution.
2. You must be currently teaching at least 1 section of FYC or have taught at least 1 section in the last academic year (Fall of 2019 or Spring of 2019).
3. You must include either a narrative reading or narrative writing assignment in your FYC class.

Thank you for your time and interest! If you would like a copy of the Informed Consent form, please let me know. Here is the survey link:

https://iastate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ctC43IEA3URkDbL

All the best,

Daniel Henke

APPENDIX D. SURVEY PROTOCOL

Q1: How, and for what purpose, are narratives being used in your FYC course?

Q2: What value does this assignment or reading bring to your classroom or pedagogies that other readings or assignments do not bring?

Q3: Please describe how this assignment or reading helps meet your goals or teaching outcomes or learning objectives for your classroom:

Q4: To what extent does the assignment or reading explore or destabilize dominant knowledge productions such as race, ability, gender identity, etc.?

Q5: Please use the textbox below to explain: What additional thoughts would you like to share that have not been encapsulated in this survey?

APPENDIX E. PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Your institution's name:
2. How long have you been employed at this institution?
3. What is your current job title?
4. What is your teaching load during the academic year?
5. How many sections of FYC do you generally teach each academic year?
6. What is your age?
7. What is your gender identity?
8. What is your ethnicity?

APPENDIX F. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for agreeing to the interview. Do you have any questions before I begin?

Record

1. How would you define narrative?
2. You indicated that you include a narrative reading or a narrative writing assignment? Can we talk more about those?

If reading, which readings?

How are you using these readings in your classroom?

Why did you choose these particular readings over other readings?

If writing assignment, can you briefly describe the assignment?

Do students have a right to their own language in this assignment?

What surprised you the most about your students' writing with this assignment?

Would you change anything for future assignments?

3. Is there anything else you would like to add about the use of narrative in FYC?

Any last questions or comments for me?

Thank you!