

Emergent/Discursive Resistance:  
A Situated Analysis of the Application of  
Autobiographical Narrative to an  
Academic Space

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## *Introduction*

At the beginning of my Educational Studies classes here at Swarthmore, I've often been assigned some sort of written autobiographical narrative. In some cases, these narratives had to address particular topics, anything from an educational experience at a certain age level to the connections between my home and school lives. The process by which I write these papers is almost entirely different from my other academic compositions. One of the most noticeable differences is in my ability to speak for myself. When I write these papers, I feel as though I am able to actively assert myself. In many of my other experiences with academic writing, the voice I seek to achieve feels distant, almost unreachable. I use language over which I possess little ownership. It often feels highly performative, if not feigned all together, almost as though this voice prevents me from saying what I mean. I think this academic voice is one that actively seeks out conformity. But who gets to conform?

Whenever I attempt to complete schoolwork in my room, a hallmate inevitably stops by to say hello or ask a question. My status as a Resident Assistant (RA) compels me to respond to most of the countless knocks on my door. On one occasion, this past fall, a first year student approached me with a paper in hand. It was the end of September and this student had just received her first official grade at college. The tears in her eyes warned of an undoubtedly negative result. The student handed me the paper and asked me to help her figure out where she went wrong. The paper was covered in red ink. The title was crossed out and the first paragraph was smothered in corrections. This opening page characterized the entire paper. On the final page, where the student expected to find

a grade, the professor wrote “See Me,” followed by a short paragraph listing concerns and criticisms. As the first year student described her feelings with respect to the situation, I realized that she was interpreting the professor’s assessment of the paper as a judgment of her person. At the time, I wondered why the student would react in such a way. I also wondered how the professor could be so harsh.

I believe that in this situation, the professor and the student both possessed agency. The professor had the opportunity to respond to the student’s paper in a particular way, and the student had the opportunity to interpret the professor’s comments in a particular way. This said, I believe the form in which this student wrote the paper also played a role in mediating this interaction between professor and student. The analytical paper assignment asked the student to assert a particular voice. In writing this paper, the student failed to assert the voice for which the professor had hoped. Despite this failure, the student still asserted some sort of personal voice within this paper. I am confident in my description of this voice as “personal” because of the student’s reaction to the professor’s comments. I believe this written form encouraged the professor to view the student’s writing as an objective presentation. An objective presentation implies little or no subjectivity on behalf of the student. The voice that speaks throughout the paper is distant and univocal, or static. The student, in a failed attempt to utilize this voice, fell victim to both the lie of objectivity told by the written form and the insensitivity of the professor to the situated context within which this assignment was completed.

While this analysis might appear somewhat “wishy-washy” or “emotional,” I think it’s important to address the ways in which academic language use, and language use in general, is inextricably connected to both subjective selves and social orders. To

acquire written academic intelligibility is to conform to particular sets of sociocultural relations via language use. I refer here to the academic spaces with which I've interacted. More specifically, I'm speaking of my experiences in undergraduate education. During this portion of my education, I've toiled to hone my skills of argumentation in both spoken and written discourse. In this project, I analyze autobiographical narrative, a written form that is seldom-used in academic spaces. I seek to explore the ways in which writers assert selves through it, and position these selves with respect to greater social orders.

My experience is that analytical writing predominates these academic spaces. Regardless of whether writing up a lab report or a paper for a political science course, writing seeks to move the author and readers closer to some objective truth. The author is either distant or entirely absent from their work. I believe that traditional written discourse not only allows, but encourages writers to divorce any sort of situated, subjective self from their own written words. The push toward removing the author's voice from analytical written work implies a particular positionality for the author with respect to the audience. This positionality is chief among my interests here. I believe it is important to examine the extent to which different forms of writing allow writers to actively assert themselves with respect to audiences.

I will argue that the autobiographical narratives I analyzed are discursively resistant. These narratives challenge the constitution of selfhood in dominant academic written discourse, the relationship between subject and audience, and structural social relations as constituted within current orders of discourse. The narratives are shaped by the dominant orders of discourse, but they also function to resist and reshape these orders.

### *Where I'm Coming From*

I approach this thesis as an Honors Special Major in Linguistics and Education. Although I've taken courses in Syntax, Semantics, and Phonology, my primary Linguistic interest deals with the social. I initially learned of Linguistics as an academic discipline in my second year at Swarthmore College. I entered the field through the study of syntax. I took this course because someone told me that it basically amounted to the study of grammar. Throughout my elementary and secondary school experiences, I was obsessed with prescriptive grammar. Adhering to certain rules became ritualistic for me. I can still remember moments when I slipped and forgot to use these rules. These were moments when I became too comfortable and forgot that I was outside of my home. I even sought to change my family's ways of talk inside the home. I heard many of my friends' parents correct their grammar, so I would do the same to my parents and siblings. As I reflect on things now, I understand that I was using language to position myself in a place of power with respect to the rest of the world. As much as my family would often put me in my place, they respected me for my ability to present myself this way to the wider population.

I now view language as a perpetual mediator of countless social relationships. I seek to understand different types of language use and the ways in which they come to position people. I am fascinated and baffled by my own ability to abuse this power in my attempts to transcend the confines of my identities at particular times. That is, my age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, etc. create a multiplicity of identities in me, and language is one method by which I examine their limits.

## *Chapter 1: Literature Review*

In *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*, Linda Brodkey describes listening to her four year old son talk to himself while playing alone:

That's when it occurred to me for the first time that if children say aloud what adults have learned to keep to themselves, then at that very moment I could be unwittingly composing an autobiography to myself not unlike the one I could hear my son declaiming...So much conspires against [my son's] remembering that he is the narrator of his life (Brodkey 1996, p. 150).

Brodkey's understanding that we are the narrators of our lives is shared among a relatively small group of postmodern thinkers on autobiographical narrative. This work arose largely as a rejection of the previous modern claim to objectivity in narrative study. Sometime in the late twentieth century, people like Brodkey began challenging the distance and seeming impenetrability of this modern way of thought. While realizations such as Brodkey's are indeed the focus here, it is important to contextualize them within a body of research that has a past, present, and future.<sup>1</sup> This literature review is meant to situate my analysis of autobiographical narrative within this body of research. I will focus primarily on the ways in which thinking on autobiographical narrative has changed throughout the twentieth century. I will present three brief sections on narratology, autobiography, and autobiographical narrative in education. This background will provide a context for the autobiographical analysis I present later.

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<sup>1</sup> The complication is that this research spans a number of fields. While this is not inherently problematic (in fact it is probably the opposite), it means that researchers from different fields bring their own method of inquiry to the process. I encourage the reader to engage with these different fields, seeking to trace the path to Brodkey and her colleagues of like mind.

## *Narratology*

In the 1960s and 1970s narratology referred to a particular, structuralist analysis of narrative texts. It focused on the traditional Saussurian distinction between Parole and Langue. Whereas Parole was language in action, Langue designated the underlying rules and structures of language (Saussure 1917). Narratology applied the Saussurian model of Linguistics to narrative analysis. Thus, the focus would be on Langue, not Parole. Saussure viewed language as a system of “pure values,” constituted by “ideas and sounds” (Saussure 1917). Saussure’s system necessarily analyzed language synchronically, or apart from context. In order to apply his concept of the signification chain, one must artificially take linguistic units outside of time and place. This synchronistic analysis avoids some of the formulaic complications caused by language in action. Narratology was thus a generative study in which its practitioners proposed generative rules, tested them, refined them, and tested them again (Prince 1994).

Inspired by Czech and Russian formalism, *narratologie*, the science of narrative, was actually a French production. Formalism, practiced in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, sought to divorce the study of literature from historical contexts (McCauley 1994). This divorce allowed for the establishment of formal elements of literary works, along with their respective artistic ramifications. Formalists such as Boris Eikhenbaum and Vladimir Propp argued that the focus of the study of literature should be the processes by which a certain “literariness” is achieved in poetic language. A contemporary scholar interprets the use of this term here:

...“literariness” is a function of the process of defamiliarization, which involves “estranging,” “slowing down,” or “prolonging” perception and thereby impeding the reader’s habitual, automatic relation to objects, situations, and poetic form itself” (McCauley 1994).

For formalists the goal of quantifying literariness remained, but the forms they thought capable of achieving it would change over time. This was viewed as a process of literary evolution, in which superior forms would arise in opposition to those prior. Although there was some disagreement over the respective roles of form and content among formalists, they generally avoided dealing with the so-called “mysticism” of content (McCauley 1994). The formalists became an insular group, seeking to scientificize their work so as to shield it from outside forces. Anything that could not translate into some sort of literary data was, for all intents and purposes, useless. In late formalism, there were attempts to incorporate diachronic views on language into what had previously been entirely a synchronic study; that is, formalists had considered language statically and ahistorically, but began to address issues of language change (McCauley 1994).

The traditional practice of formalism ended around 1930, but many other intellectual movements trace their history back to it. Bakhtin was a part of one movement that developed primarily in opposition to formalism. While Bakhtin’s work informed authors such as Brodkey (who opened this piece), formalism did beget a few closer (historically speaking) intellectual relatives. One of these was the Prague Linguistic Circle, founded by Roman Jakobson, former founder of the formalist Russian Linguistic Circle. The Prague Circle, which carried on in Russian formalist tradition, is important in the current discussion because it came to inform the rise of French structuralism:

Were we to comprise the leading idea of present-day science in its most various manifestations, we could hardly find a more appropriate designation than *structuralism*. Any set of phenomena examined by contemporary science is treated not as a mechanical agglomeration but as a structural whole, and the basic task is to reveal the inner . . . laws of this system. What appears to be the focus of scientific preoccupations is no longer the

outer stimulus, but the internal premises of the development: now the mechanical conception of processes yields to the question of their function (quoted in Dolezel 1994).

Here, Jakobson articulates the structuralist stance on language. The inner rules that govern linguistic production are to be the focus of study. In Jakobson's structuralism, language could be analyzed at all levels. While one of Jakobson's primary interests was phonetics, he also sought to produce structuralist accounts of larger units of language, such as sentences and, most important for the purposes of this project, narratives. He viewed all units of language as somehow combining to form larger, contrastive units. This is what distinguished structuralism from formalism, or, for Jakobson, his work in the Prague Circle from his work in the Russian Circle. Whereas formalism emphasized the ultimate goal of "literariness," structuralism was willing to view literariness as a relational concept, which itself is constituted by smaller units and which combines with other units to form greater concepts (Dolezel 1994). This reflects structuralist attempts to identify and quantify universality in the world, from its smallest constitutive elements to its most universal ones.

Jakobson went on to work with cultural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss, eventually leading to the application of structuralism to culture, a bridge formalism would never cross. The idea of constitutive units led Lévi-Strauss to analyze Native American narrative as structural linguists would analyze language. Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss always embraced structuralist models as they applied them to new discursive genres, such as narrative. In the 1970s this would come to be called *narratologie*, or narratology, the study of narrative in all its varied forms--written, spoken, etc (McCauley 1994).

While narratology might have structuralist roots, its practice has changed dramatically over the past thirty years. The current practice utilizes the intellectual

progress made by scholars such as Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson without necessarily relying on the inhibiting nature of structuralism. This is manifested in a push away from objective narrative analysis toward culturally contextualized analysis (Brockheimer and Carbaugh 2001). The analysis reflects on its own position within this context as well its relationship to other forms of cultural analysis. Recent narratology might, in fact, employ structural analytical instruments in attempts to characterize narrative. The distinguishing factor, however, is the turn away from seeking out universal narrative structures.

Most recently, narrative analysis has involved an increasingly wide range of academic disciplines, though primarily in the social sciences. The study of *autobiographical* narrative adds an important dimension to this inquiry. The process of engaging the subjective voice in narrative formation is most often associated with resisting the use of a dominant, objective narrative. Past reliance on overarching narratives that encapsulate and remove the need for subjective voices negated the need to hear individual subjects' voices.<sup>2</sup>

One way to resist this structure is to highlight the role of subjectivity in autobiographical narrative—to actively reflect on the narrative itself as opposed to its content. This type of narrative does not necessarily seek to get outside of anything, it simply reflects on its positionality with respect to the supposed larger narrative. It draws attention to itself and questions the validity of something that purportedly speaks on its behalf.

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<sup>2</sup> Here I'm talking about narratives that speak on behalf of entire fields and the subjects therein. This poses a challenge to the existence of a larger narrative of which all narratives are a part.

## *Autobiography*

Autobiographical memory, like narratology, has a contentious history as a field of inquiry. While many psychologists attempt to locate the universal (cognitive) mechanisms involved in the production and presentation of this memory, others point to social contexts as primary factors in autobiography. That is, what is the context in which the autobiography is produced? For whom is it produced? These are just samples of the many questions that constructivists propose and address. In this work, the constructivist stance is most central in that it looks to sociocultural relations in its discussion of autobiography. Thus, universality is much less important than a situated, reflective study.

In *Acts of Meaning*, Jerome Bruner articulates a history of the constructed self and proposes ways in which to reflect on this self. Bruner points to the work of social psychologist Kenneth Gergen as some of the earliest incorporations of constructivism into traditional psychology (Bruner 1990). Gergen found that different people's self-image changed with regard to particular contexts. Self-image was more or less positive as it interacted with perceptions of other people and things in different environments. Gergen went on to draw two universal conclusions about these processes. With a capacity for reflexivity, we can change the present based on reflections on the past or change the past based on a particular "present." The second is the ability to "envision alternatives," leading us to constantly consider new ontological stances for ourselves, depending on cultural contexts (Bruner 1990).

While Gergen does not speak directly to "Self" as narrator of its own story, other psychologists, drawing largely from the framework of psychoanalysis, consider the

implications of constructivism for the psychoanalytic patient. The issue here is the way in which to view psychoanalytic memory. In one view, the patient can be encouraged to find memories that s/he has suppressed for some reason or another. In contrast, the patient's reflection on the past is viewed as the construction of experience based on certain (psychoanalytic) contexts. Donald Spence proposes the idea of narrative truth (1982). He does not necessarily frame this truth in opposition to some sort of objective truth. Instead, he describes it as a changing truth with respect to the framing of the narrative. In essence, truth is achieved with respect to the autobiographer's telling of story. In terms of psychoanalysis, Spence argues that the psychoanalyst should seek to help the person narrate their story in particular ways. This was a step away from the previous job for the psychoanalyst, which consisted largely of assisting the patient in uncovering suppressed memories. Spence's psychoanalysis speaks to the relationship between patients' stories of their past and the construction of their present and future.

While Spence focuses the content of narrative, Roy Schafer speaks to the construction of the narrative itself (Schafer 1981). Schaefer reflects not only on the process of narrating experiences for others, but also narrating for one's self. There are two stories involved here. The first is the narration itself, which could be expressed in any form or shared with anyone/anything. To think of these narrations as also being told to their narrators (in addition to whatever audience is involved) implies a second story. The process of self construction not only changes with respect to context, it also divides the narrator from the narrated. Schafer refers to this interaction as the second story (Schafer 1981).

Stanton Wortham emphasizes the importance of self-representation not just in narrative, but also in the relational component involved in the interaction between the narrator and their audience. Shifts in the representation of self also represent shifts in relation to the audience (Wortham 2001). Wortham details the process by which the narrator, while representing themselves in particular ways, necessarily takes on the characteristics they represent. They are only able to take on these characteristics with respect to the audience. Thus the relational aspect of narrative must not be overlooked, as it is a crucial step in the process by which the narrator is reborn in their narration.

Wortham describes a narration in which the narrator initially portrays herself as passive victim. That is, the narrator frames her story such that different situations act upon her. There is a subsequent transition in the narration in which the narrator actively seeks to take control of the situations acting upon her. Wortham argues that there is not only representational importance here, that is, the ways in which the narrator represents herself in different situations, but also relational importance. The narrator transitions from passive to active not only in the story but also in her telling of the story. Her relation to the audience as a means by which to perform the transition is a crucial step in describing the possibilities of narrative. The description of "Self" as not only representational but also relational is the crucial contribution.

This relational component is also important in that it helps account for the foregrounding of different experiences in different tellings of the same story. If the narrative is by nature relational, then the context in which the narrator tells their story plays a significant role in the construction of a particular truth. The focus on this relation helps to situate the narrative in whatever context it is told. If the context is not considered

alongside a particular representation, this representation would be forced to tell the entire story. Wortham's relational focus challenges the ways in which particular tellings are rationalized.

Bruner proposes the study of autobiography as a way in which to analyze some of the questions Gergen, Spence, Schafer, and Wortham raise about "Self." Here, Bruner outlines the goals of this study:

It does not matter whether the account conforms to what others might say who were witnesses, nor are we in pursuit of such ontologically obscure issues as whether the account is "self-deceptive" or "true." Our interest, rather is only in what the person thought he did, what he thought he was doing it for, what kinds of plights he thought he was in, and so on (Bruner 1986, p. 135).

Bruner establishes autobiographical narrative as a study that is central to study of the constructions of selves. This study clearly stands in contrast to positivist inquiries that view autobiography as solely a means by which to find the "real problems" or other greater "truths." If the autobiography is the focus of research, then it is true in and of itself.

Bruner presents several studies of autobiographical narrative. He describes the narrative features for which he and his fellow researchers look, as well as the way in which they ask the subjects to present their narratives. Bruner seeks to make the framing question as open-ended as possible, so as to allow the subject to tell their truest story (Bruner 2001). He and his colleague actually tell subjects about their interests in autobiographical narrative and their desire to analyze the ways in which people tell their lives. While the subjects tell their stories, the researchers respond vocally and physically.

In this particular study, the subjects were members of the same family. Individuals from three different generations of this family gave their own autobiographical narratives. While the subjects were separate from one another during

this portion of the study, they eventually came together to conduct a family interview. The researchers analyzed the autobiographical narratives and compared them to the greater family narrative. They used methods of discourse analysis to discover the different individuals' narrative nuances, as well as overall family structures (Bruner 2001).

This method of autobiographical narrative analysis comes decades after the first challenges to positivist psychological reflections on "Self." Whereas the formalist approach sought to discover universality, this latest Brunerian approach certainly allows for discussions of contextual factors. In the past, this type of narrative might not have been regarded as worthy of study. Furthermore, the analytical approach might be viewed as a reflection on poststructuralist criticisms of the self-proving nature of science. That is, the process by which scientists pose questions that they have already answered in asking them. Here, the questions refer to situated constructions. The responses might appear limited, but that is because they do not seek the same universal ends as their predecessors.

It is also important to note the different critiques of standard conceptions of the narrative self. Wortham documents these critiques in his description of the relational nature of narrative. The argument for the representational nature of narrative points to the enactment of particular characteristics through narrative as a means by which to shape future behavior. Many argue that this presentation necessitates a linear narrative in order to allow the narrator to "foreground" particular characteristics. The feminist critique describes the non-linear, "fragmented" narrations of many women and other members of oppressed groups (Wortham 2001). If the representational self were to tell the entire

story, these people would be unable to engage with narrative to effect a new present and future self. Their inability to highlight particular characteristics would leave them unable to represent themselves so as to encourage the performance of a new self.

Autobiographical narrative, in this light, is useful not in its ability to present a linear story about self, but in its ability to navigate between a multiplicity of mutually imbricated, sometimes contradictory selves. This critique also points the tendency of linear narrations to fall into the trap of dominant, universalist narrations. These are the very narrations that fail to account for the experiences of silenced groups. If these groups gain voices only in their ability to assimilate to this dominant narrative, then they are unable to gain emancipatory voices.

Feminist critiques also speak to the extent to which self becomes objectified in narrative. If narrative is linear and logical, then self becomes a convenient, quantifiable unit. This makes the narrator the owner of any experience and the sole agent in the production of this experience (Neumann and Peterson 1997). If narrative is important only in as much as it is representational, then the narrator would only have the experience of past and present selves to utilize in any given telling. This would fail to explain the therapeutic potential for narrative, as the possibility for the narrator to create a new self would be constricted by the past. Wortham's relational self addresses this critique. When narration is viewed as relational, each telling is in part unique to the situation in which it is told. Thus each telling has the possibility for the creation of new pasts, presents, and futures. This telling does not necessarily become subject to dominant narratives.

### *Autobiographical Narrative and Education*

In order to apply this discussion to mainstream education, it is important to trace the use of narrative in academic writing. Educational researcher Sandra Stotsky describes autobiographical narrative as “personal” writing, distinguishing it from “personalized” writing, which encourages the individual to analyze a given work through personal lenses. Stotsky points to James Moffett and James Britton as two of the leaders in the push to incorporate “personal” writing into educational curricula (Stotsky 1995).

Moffett conceived of narrative as a way in which to begin with decreased distance between student and conceptual idea (Stotsky 1995). These theories were derived largely from the work of Piaget, whose different stages of conceptual understanding led Moffett to propose personal writing as a way in which to mediate between stages.

Britton, who also bases many of his ideas on the work of Piaget, elaborates on the ability of narrative to utilize students’ access to a type of natural, inner language. But Britton never directly prescribes the use of autobiographical narrative or what he calls “expressive writing” in classrooms (Stotsky 1995). This leaves educators to decide the extent to which autobiographical narrative would play a role in their classrooms.

Some attribute the focus on autobiographical narrative in education in recent decades to a shift in western thought from “logico-scientific” ways on knowing to “personal stories as an equally significant way of understanding human experience” (Bruner 1985, Witherall and Noddings 1991). This is closely tied to the push toward incorporating the voices of previously silenced groups in the creation of educational curricula.

Sandra Stotsky points out that few claims about “personal” writing are substantiated by empirical studies. She questions whether this writing actually facilitates the acquisition of reading and writing skills. Furthermore, Stotsky argues, the cognitive implications of Britton’s and Moffett’s works, that is, the supposed ability of personal writing to help navigate between developmental cognitive stages, are largely based on unchallenged and baseless assumptions.

Stotsky also worries about the ways in which personal writing privileges those who come from particular backgrounds. She argues that it is dangerous to leave students responsible for their writing experiences because it will inevitably reproduce systems in which students who come from particular backgrounds consistently perform better than others:

With its stress on ownership and voice, its preoccupation with children selecting their own topics, its reluctance to intervene positively and constructively during conferencing, and its complete mystification of what has to be learned for children to produce effective written products, ...is currently promoting a situation in which only the brightest middle class children can possibly learn what is needed (Stotsky 1995 p. 766).

Stotsky’s concern is closely tied to critiques pointing to the objectification of the individual involved in autobiographical narrative. There is some concern as to whether the focus on the individual might prevent teachers from performing their pedagogical duties.

While Stotsky’s arguments speak to the lack of cognitive evidence for narrative mediation of development and the focus on student-motivated writing, others articulate the possibility that exists in narrative. Describing writing as social practice, Linda Brodkey highlights not only the reflective nature of autobiography, but also its capacity for the production of unexplored pasts, presents, and futures (Brodkey 1987). Thus, students can utilize autobiographical narrative to attempt to transcend definition from the

outside-in. More specifically, autobiographical narrative allows students to position themselves in particular ways with respect to dominant discourses of literacy. Whereas Stotsky's critiques speak to particular types of "personal" writing, Brodkey takes a broader view of literacy practice. Brodkey details the ways in which literacy is misinterpreted in everyday educational practices. Literacy is continually viewed as simply learning to read; that is, learning to comprehend and somehow display that comprehension (Brodkey 1996). Using Hymes' concept of "speech communities," Brodkey deconstructs these notions of literacy. In Brodkey's view, literacy theories must always incorporate the social nature of knowing, as well as the role of writing in the process of reading (Brodkey 2000). Writing here does not describe simply the specific physical process of coding spoken language, but the general process of meaning making. This is certainly connected to the Brunerian shift from "logico-centered" knowing.

Neumann and Peterson, among others, view autobiographical narrative as one way in which to rewrite ways of knowing. In *Learning from our Lives: Women, Research, and Autobiography*, they draw a distinct connection between autobiography and resistance. As educators, they believe that it is necessary to engage those both literally and figuratively disenfranchised in these new processes of meaning-making. Their specific focus is on the ways in which literate discourse outside of autobiography reproduces the current target status of women educators and learners:

...autobiography helps us see and understand the hurtful aspects of institutional existence in academe through the eyes of those who may have suffered in silence through subtle and overt discrimination or neglect. It also helps us see, appreciate, and support the informal structures that help people from and resist the hurtful features of organizational existence...Autobiography can help us see how long-established processes of knowledge formation in the field of education and its multiple discourse communities support or thwart the development and legitimation of women's epistemologies in research and teaching. It also helps us see how some women resist and redirect constraining currents of thought in the field (Neumann and Peterson 1997, p. 3).

Neumann and Peterson are not alone in this view of autobiographical narrative. In the introduction to *Construction Sites: Excavating Race, Class, and Gender among Urban Youth*, Lois Weiss and Michelle Fine discuss the ability of youth to resist oppressive structures:

“And yet many of this generation refuse to be shut out. Cultivating social critique and action in their own small spaces, they toil sometimes under the caring eyes of organizers, teachers, parents, or peers. As often, they do so despite adults, often quite alone. Boys and girls of color, poverty, or both challenge perverse representations of themselves and their ‘deficits’ and ‘pathologies,’ organizing in quiet spaces. Girls across race and class lines are taking back their bodies and public spaces. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth demand spaces for visibility and comfort in high schools and in college. So here we look at the movements of youth, as they shape and reshape identities, as they challenge our stereotypes of them, as they imagine and build possibilities for the future” (Weis and Fine 2000, xiii).

Weis and Fine argue for the possibility of people in target groups to resist oppression and imagine different futures. This process of imagining different futures is certainly Brodkey’s focus, as she challenges the spaces in which certain types of meaning making are allowed to take place.

Susan Franzosa also speaks to the resistive potential of narrative discourse in education, tying it closely to the process of normalization that education necessarily involves. This process of normalization takes place on many levels, both textually and otherwise. She points to Foucault’s description of normalization as a process by which to conform prospectively deviant sectors of the population. In this instance, education is placed alongside asylums and correctional centers (Franzosa 2003). Within each sector, normalization is a means by which society might prevent abnormal behavior. The comparison to what might seem like distant spheres implies the semiotic importance of normalization. In educational settings, students are normalized not only to particular language use (written and oral), but also greater patterns of meaning making. These patterns involve the internalization of a “dominant perspective and its logic of

comparison” (Franzosa 2003). Language is a critical component in this process. If one is to become socialized to a particular language use, one must necessarily develop particular individual and group identities in accordance with this use.

In educational settings, written academic discourse maintains a dominant position within the process of language socialization. As students become socialized, they learn to represent themselves in particular ways. In order for them to be successful in this process, they must also internalize the norms of this environment. Only through this internalization are students able to step outside of themselves to view their language use from the perspectives of others. Thus, language use means constantly positioning one’s self with respect to the ways in which one believes one is perceived by others. This greater process is distant from students’ pragmatic language use. The dominant discourse sits at a distance great enough to ensure both its ability to reproduce itself and resist challenges to its authority. This thesis is intended to examine the ways in which autobiographical narrative might be used in educational settings to call the distance of the dominant discourse into question.

Most students have learned rules that readers rather than writers believe govern prose. They have not been taught what every writer knows, that one writes on the bias or not at all. A bias may be provided by a theory or an experience or an image or an ideology. Without a bias, however, language is only words as cloth is only threads. To write is to find words that explain what can be seen from an angle of vision, the limitations of which determine a wide or narrow bias, but not the lack of one. Far from guaranteeing objectivity, third-person assertions too often record an unexamined routine in which the writers who follow a bias provided by say, the “objectivism” of journalism or science confound that worldview/theory/ideology with reality. The bias that is or should be treated as pejorative rather than honorific is that which feigns objectivity by dressing up its reasons in seemingly unassailable logic and palming off its interest as disinterest—in order to silence arguments from other quarters (Brodkey 2000, p. 25).

## *Chapter 2: My Project and Methodology*

In fall 2002, I entered the senior thesis seminar with several other Linguistics students. In this seminar, we collaborated to develop topics and provide support during the writing process. My interest in sociolinguistics led me to focus on nonstandard language varieties and their academic illegitimacy. Incorporating the Educational Studies component of my major, I planned to look at teacher preparation programs and their treatment of language issues. Essentially, this work would amount to my argument for what all teachers should know about Linguistics. It was not long before I realized that this was not necessarily the most well-considered undertaking. First, there are problems with an undergraduate student telling teachers what they need to know. If I were a teacher, I would roll my eyes at me! Second, I had to consider the implications of this stance in terms of whose responsibility it is to effect educational change—it cannot just be about teachers. Third, I have a problem with the way that reform plays out and who gains access to it. If reform is so distant from everyday practice, particularly practice in schools lacking financial support (among other things), how is it to achieve widespread success? I believe that we must look to the ways in which teachers are currently resisting educational oppression passively, and build upon these practices to form a universal anti-oppressive educational system.

With these ideas in mind, I decided to shift my focus to educational meaning making processes. As I navigated this shift, one idea from my first topic kept coming up. I had interviewed a professor at another institution to ask about their institution's teacher preparation program. During the course of the interview this professor gave me copies of

several of their syllabi. While the topics of the courses varied, I noticed that the first writing assignment listed on all of these syllabi was an autobiography of some sort. This stood out to me because I have completed similar assignments for Educational Studies classes here at Swarthmore, and also because these assignments seem different from the standard types of writing assignments seen on college syllabi, which tend to be analytical and expository in nature. I thought about some of my experiences writing in this genre. I wondered why Educational Studies classes were the only ones in which I utilized this form. I also thought back to my peers' reactions after hearing about these assignments. By and large, these students would scoff at this writing form. I got the impression that it just wasn't as legitimately academic as analytical, argument-based writing. These observations led me to develop several research questions:

1. What does autobiographical narrative look like in use?
2. What are the ways in which identity is asserted and to what communities do authors align themselves while writing in this form?
3. What are its possibilities and limitations as a form of discursive resistance?

In order to investigate these questions, I decided to look at autobiographical writing samples. More specifically, I wanted to use samples composed in an academic environment. While I would eventually consider the identities of the autobiographical writers, I chose not to rely on ethnographic analyses of their experiences with respect to the utilization of this written form in academic spaces. This decision would allow me to

narrow the scope of this project. Thus, I sought to use autobiographical writing samples as my primary data.

After I presented these ideas to my advisor, they helped me find a set of autobiographical assignments that students had written in conjunction with a class. This class, entitled Literacies and Social Identities, was an elective class in the Educational Studies program at Swarthmore College (I have attached the syllabus as Addendum 1). Not only were these narratives exactly the type of data I needed, they were easily accessible. In order to gain access to these writings, I actually made a guest appearance in this class. I spoke to the students and the professor, requesting permission to utilize their autobiographies. I told them I was looking at relations between different types of writing used in academic spaces. The vast majority of the class granted me access to their writing. I had them sign a consent form in order to make things official (Addendum 2).

For this assignment, the students were asked to write literacy autobiographies. The professor presented instructions in the form of a single, one-sided handout (Appendix 3). The assignment was given the heading “1<sup>st</sup> paper,” and the instructions were as follows:

Each of us has a story to tell about literacy in our own lives. You are invited to tell part of your story. Please write one chapter, about 5 pages, in your literacy autobiography. Submit it with a Table of Contents for your complete literacy autobiography that includes the title of the book and the title of each chapter, even those that are not submitted.

The class would have approximately one and a half weeks to complete the assignment, after which time their autobiographies would be “copied and returned to be read by everyone.” The assignments were, in fact, compiled into book form. They would serve as the primary reading for the week following their distribution. The grading would be a

collaborative process including both the professor and the students. The students were not initially informed of their responsibility for self-grading.

In sum, I had 25 autobiographical pieces to examine. I initially read each autobiography to look for common thematic content. At the same time, I sought to identify unique features that stood out from the group. Based on this initial reading I chose to analyze three particular autobiographies. I felt as though these autobiographies were particularly representative of what I believe are key issues with respect to this written form:

1. The assertion of multiple selves (How is the self constituted in this formation?)
2. The emergence of selves as interactional positioning (What are the tendencies of subject positioning with respect to the self and the audience in this formation?)
3. The interaction between different discourses in autobiographical narrative (What types of discourses are utilized in this formation? What are the ways in which these discourses interact with one another in this formation?)

While each sample narrative speaks to all three of these ideas, they do so in varying ways. In order to introduce the three samples, I share here a brief summary of each. My summaries of the narratives highlight the broad events around which I framed my analysis:

Andrew

Andrew's narration involves learning to read and write. He focuses on his family's and schools' roles in this process. The narrative opens with a story he wrote in second grade. He recounts the events surrounding this story's production and distribution. After the story was published in a school newsletter, he realized that he had made a mistake. He says that this event has come to frame the ways in which he thinks about the printed word.

Andrea:

Andrea tells of her transition from a over-confident, adolescent self to a fearful college self. She explores the ways in which these two selves interact with one another, and then describes how these selves have given way to a current self.

Sara:

Sara narrates the ways in which she's interacted with dance throughout her life. She shows how her experiences with dance have always been connected to other experiences outside of dance. While drawing connections between dance and other experiences, she describes moments in her life when she was almost entirely disconnected from dance. She eventually details her current relationship with dance.

My decision to focus on these three autobiographies and not the others certainly reflects my belief that they will allow me to speak to particular issues in particular ways. This said, I do not believe that my decisions have constrained my ability to reflect on the

pieces outside of my initial understandings. I intentionally sought out narratives that would reflect both general trends as well as atypical features. I asked myself which of these trends and/or anomalies deserved primary attention.

The three levels at which I seek to analyze this use of autobiographical narrative in academic spaces are: subject (self), interaction between self and audience, and interaction between different discourses.

I refer to these types of analysis as different “levels” because I see one as a “microanalysis” and another a “macroanalysis.” In this case, subject analysis is micro and discourse analysis is macro. This sort of analysis will allow me to think critically about the ways in which this written form functions with respect to both the individuals and institutions. I believe that these levels work dialectically. If the functions of institutions affect the ways in which individuals participate in them and the participation of individuals affects the ways in which institutions function, then I must analyze both of these levels to gain a sense as to gain a sense of the greater social implications of the use of this written form.

In order to analyze these narratives, I utilized the methods of Ivani\_, Fairclough, and Wortham. I chose not to perform a quantitative linguistic analysis because I did not believe that it would shed light on the ways in which different voices were interacting through these texts. Ivani\_ further articulates this claim:

...I am interested in the ways in which the texts set up multiple subject positions for their writers, by being composed of two or more discourses, juxtaposed or intertwined. Therefore differences from one part of a text to another and boundaries between discourses are more interesting than global features or global comparisons from one text to another...To understand the discourse characteristics of a text it is often necessary to go to considerable degrees of delicacy. For example, number of modalizations may not be so interesting as what sorts of things are modalized; number of material process verbs is too crude a category for the reasons outlined above: the analysis only gets interesting when you see what sorts of actors they have. Therefore detailed analysis of samples may be more revealing than global counts of broader categories. (Ivani\_ 1998 p. 118)

Since the goal of this project was to bring critical linguistic lenses to narrative writing used in academic spaces, I relied almost exclusively upon various linguistic theories and the texts themselves. My (approximately) five-minute presentation in the classroom was the only interaction I intended to have with the authors prior to completion of this project.<sup>3</sup> I presented my findings to the class at the end of the term.

While Ivani\_, Fairclough, and Wortham all draw upon similar theorists, namely Bakhtin and Foucault, for their own methodological tools, there are several ways in which each takes a stance with respect to particular issues. I am utilizing Ivani\_'s concept of *actual intertextuality*, Fairclough's interpretation of *interdiscursivity*, and Wortham's mediated/emergent approach in my analysis of the autobiographical narratives. I situated these authors' work among the theorists that initially informed them so as not to mislead the reader into thinking that each author dreamed up these ideas without drawing upon the work of others. As I situate these authors among the theorists that inform them, I concurrently situate myself within this process.

Wortham argues that the concepts of *mediation* and *emergence* in autobiographical narrative analysis will help describe the ways in which one interprets different selves within texts, their relationships with respect to one another, and their relationships with respect to a contextualized audience. A mediated approach to this analysis highlights the cues for determining the context that is most relevant for analysis (Wortham 2001). More specifically, mediation describes the immediate interactional accomplishment of the narrative, as well as the ways in which this interaction is situated in a particular context. Emergence, on the other hand, points to the ways in which the

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<sup>3</sup> I was actually familiar with several of the students in the class. The only time I spoke to the authors about their narratives was during this short presentation to their class.

contexts involved in mediation emerge throughout the text (Wortham 2001). That is, different interactional positioning occurs both in moments and within larger contexts. By positioning themselves in particular ways throughout texts, authors can also achieve some overall emergent effects with respect to the audience.

While Wortham's analysis speaks primarily to the constitution of self and the interaction between self and audience, Fairclough and Ivani\_ use their analyses to address orders of discourse. In Fairclough's *Discourse and Social Change*, he describes the concept of manifest intertextuality. He points to manifest intertextuality as a subgroup of the broader category, intertextuality. This broad category simply describes the ways in which any text relates to another. Manifest intertextuality describes situations in which "other texts are explicitly present in the text under analysis; they are 'manifestly' marked or cued by features on the surface of the texts, such as quotation marks" (Fairclough 1992). Ivani\_ reinterprets this concept as "actual intertextuality," to do justice to the fact that not all manifest intertextuality is explicitly signaled (Ivani\_ 1998). Because one of my research questions speaks to the relationship between autobiographical narrative and other written forms utilized in academic spaces, I utilize as critical a method of analysis as possible. For this reason, Ivani\_'s distinction between actual and manifest intertextuality is very salient to my analysis. Her interpretation has allowed me to examine critically the ways in which the authors position themselves both with respect to other authors and other texts. These processes are anything but "manifest." The idea of actual intertextuality emphasizes the complexity of these relations. That is, while texts might manifest themselves explicitly in one another, the relations between these texts are anything but manifest.

While actual intertextuality is only one subgroup within the general grouping of intertextuality, Fairclough highlights “interdiscursivity” as the other. Fairclough defines interdiscursivity as the “relations between discursive formations or more loosely between different types of discourse” (Fairclough 1992). It is important here to articulate some of the differences between actual intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Whereas actual intertextuality is usually an explicit process in which one text is visibly present in another, interdiscursivity refers more broadly to the incorporation of different discourse norms. Ivani\_ argues that, while this distinction might work comfortably in the analysis of public texts, such as political speeches or media discourse, private speech is much more speculative (Ivani\_ 1998). She questions whether there is any way an analyst can distinguish between an author’s use of the exact words of another and their utilization of particular discourses. Despite these criticisms, this distinction can be useful in talking about the marked (via quotation) incorporation of other texts into the analyzed text. This means that the analyst need not seek out some privileged place within the author’s interactional history.

An interdiscursive analysis looks at many levels of discourse: a societal order, and institutional order, a particular discourse type, and then constitutive elements of particular discourse types (Fairclough 1992). Fairclough attributes a hegemonic model to orders of discourse. He articulates this model here:

...leading to a view of orders of discourse as unstable equilibria, consisting of elements which are internally heterogeneous—or intertextual in their constitution—the boundaries between which are constantly open to being redrawn as orders of discourse are disarticulated and rearticulated in the course of hegemonic struggle (Fairclough 1992).

Here Fairclough emphasizes the importance of analyzing orders of discourse on many different levels. He describes four elements of orders of discourse:

Genre: “A genre implies not only a particular text type, but also particular process of producing, distributing and consuming texts.” These genres exist in a particular configuration with respect to an institution or the greater society (Fairclough, p. 126, 1992).

Activity Type: An activity type can be specified in terms of the structured sequence of actions of which it is composed, and in terms of the participants involved in the activity—that is, the set of subject positions which are socially constituted and recognized in connection with the activity type” (Fairclough, p. 126, 1992)

Style: “We can think of styles as varying along three main parameters, according to the ‘tenor, ‘mode and rhetorical mode’ of the text...firstly, styles vary according to tenor, that is, according to the sort of relationship that obtains between participants in an interaction. So we can classify styles with such terms as ‘formal, informal’, ‘official’, ‘intimate’, ‘casual’, and so on. Secondly, styles vary according to mode, according to whether texts are written or spoken or some combination of the two...Thirdly, styles vary according to rhetorical mode, and can be classified with terms such as ‘argumentative’, ‘descriptive’, and ‘expository’ (Fairclough, p. 127, 1992).

Discourse: “Discourses correspond roughly to dimensions of texts which have traditionally been discussed in terms of ‘content’, ‘ideational meanings’, ‘topic’, ‘subject matter’, and so forth...a discourse is a particular way of constructing a subject-matter, and the concept differs from its predecessors in emphasizing that contents or subject-matters—areas of knowledge—only enter texts in the mediated form of particular constructions of them” (Fairclough, p. 128, 1992).

Of these four, genre is the most overarching. That is, a shift in genre is more likely to encourage a shift in style, activity type, and discourse than vice versa (Fairclough 1992).

I will present my application of Ivani\_'s, Fairclough's, and Wortham's tools of analysis to three texts from the larger analyzed set. As I discuss the issues involved in the use of autobiographical narrative in academic spaces, I believe the ways in which I have utilized these theorists' ideas will become much clearer. In some respects, though, it is important that I concede my peripheral position with respect to this work. I am only just beginning to gain facility with these tools and approaches to textual analysis. If my application appears void of systematized rigor, it is because I am wary of the constraints involved in this approach. I have sought to situate myself thoroughly with respect to this project. Ultimately it is the reader's job to reflect on my positioning and the issues I have chosen to address. I hope that my attempts to make myself present in this text are clear, so as not to feign any sort of textual and/or ideological distance from each aspect of this project.

### *Chapter 3: Constitution of Self in Autobiographical Narrative*

#### *Introduction*

The self is on the surface of each of the autobiographies I analyzed. In this chapter, I will present some of the different ways in which the authors assert these selves. The most important point for me to convey through this chapter is that the authors use autobiographical narrative to present a multiplicity of selves. As these selves speak with different voices throughout the narrative, the author becomes assertively multivocal.

#### *Foregrounding a Self*

In each of the three samples I've chosen for this project, the author presents a particular self from the opening lines of the narrative. In Andrew's case, this presentation takes the form of a story he wrote in second grade. That is, before he begins to narrate with the voice of "now," he lets a story stand alone as an assertion of a particular, "other" voice. Andrea is similar to Andrew in that her narrative begins with a quotation of a past self:

"I know, I know already ... Yes, I *already heard* you! I'm not stupid, you know!!!! I can tell, I can see!"

Both Andrew and Andrea, in quoting selves past, foreground particular selves in their present narrations. That is, both must complete a project for a class. Their completion of this project signifies the agency of a present self. Yet each of them calls upon a past self to open this narration of the present.

Sara is different from Andrea and Andrew in that she does not open with a direct quote from a past self. She does, however, open with a quote from a character in her past:

“[Sara] get those shoulders down ... feet in parallel,” ...

While this is different from the way in which Andrea and Andrew quote past selves, I believe that Sara, in quoting this teacher, also quotes a past self. I take this interpretation from the Bakhtinian concept of ventriloquation (Bakhtin 1934). As Sara quotes a character from her past, she concurrently presents a past self. This self, existing in relation to the quoted character, speaks through the voice of another. The particular quote that Sara uses is interesting because the quoted character, a dance instructor, speaks directly to Sara. In ventriloquation, the quoted character need not speak directly to the character whose voice exists beneath the quoted character. That is, regardless of whether Sara’s dance instructor were speaking directly to Sara, the quote could be used to give voice to one of Sara’s particular selves. Because this character speaks directly to Sara, the present narration foregrounds the relationship Sara shares with respect to the quoted character. This relationship involves the assertion of at least two primary selves, a dancing and student self.

The particular self each author asserts at the beginning of the narrative simply foregrounds this self in the story. The focus here on this initial self is not meant to imply that this self is the only important one in the story. In fact, I must emphasize that this self is only one of many that each author will give voice to and foreground. In Chapter 4, I will address the extent to which this opening self is important with respect to the emergent interaction between the author and the audience.

## *Two-Self Dichotomy*

Each narrative often uses the framework of a 2-self dichotomy to negotiate the relationship between particular selves. In some cases, this dichotomy involves a tension between two past selves. With Sara, it could be said that particular past selves compete with each other, or at least exist in the absence of one another. All three authors present a dichotomy between particular past selves and the present self.

Andrew presents a dichotomy between home and school selves. A tension exists between the conformity and constraint of the school self and the freedom of the home self:

...I remember drawing on a standard, blank, white piece of paper—using crayons, nonetheless—my version of the little building in which our preschool program was located. In large letters, centered near the top of the paper, I labeled the picture, “SCOOL.” A bit later, to my horror, I realized I had made an error, and added a small, lowercase “h” in the vast space within the arc of the capital “C”...No matter how you slice my backwards, five-year-old logic, I was not happy with the fact that I had messed up, and that anybody could see it

There was no fear of embarrassment at home, however. And that was a good thing, because I was in a position to learn more at home than I would at preschool.

While these selves exist during the same period in Andrew’s life, the space between them is significant enough for him to attribute a different self to each experience. The conforming self that exists in school sits in stark contrast to the unbounded self at home. Andrew positions these selves at opposite ends of a spectrum.

In Andrew’s narrative, his restricted and free selves seem to share time but not space. One could say that these selves do not share time in the exact sense (the times when he is at school he is not at home, and vice versa), but Andrew presents both of these selves within the frame of a particular period in his life. This frame is constructed with respect to time, and the home and school selves both share it.

Part of Andrea's story consists of her transition from being a confident "know-it-all" adolescent self to a "scared" college self. In this dichotomy, she foregrounds shifts in both space and time as the dividing lines between these selves. She situates her "know-it-all" self within adolescence and at home; Her "scared" self emerges post-adolescence and at college. Unlike Andrew, Andrea uses both space and time to separate selves. Andrea and Andrew are similar, however, in that they situate selves at the opposite ends of some spectrum.

In one of Sara's dichotomies, two selves actually seem to compete with one another. During Sara's junior year of high school, she began dating a senior "who was the primary socialite of the school." Sara describes the effects of this relationship on her commitment to dance:

He was a nice enough guy; but I should have been forewarned about the problems in our relationship the first time I tried to dance at a club with friends (which included some males) and he became the over-protective jealous type. Since he didn't like to dance it meant that I didn't get to dance. I didn't think too much of it at that time, but in effect he was cutting off one of my major creative outlets. Well, we broke up at the end of the school year. I was heart broken and didn't know what to do with myself. So, I decided to replace him with the thing that had been missing in my life during our relationship ... dance.

Sara goes on to describe the process by which she became reacquainted with dance. She is similar to Andrew in that she frames her "girlfriend" self and "dancing" self within the same period of time. That is, both of these selves exist during her junior year of high school. Like with Andrew, it could be argued that these selves, in fact, do not share time. Once again, I would point out that Sara frames these selves during the same period. Sara's "girlfriend" and "dancing" selves do, in some respects, exist at the opposite ends of a spectrum. For example, when Sara is with her boyfriend she is not dancing. At the same time, I think the interaction between these particular selves makes this a unique case. Sara does not immediately lose her "dancing" self upon becoming "girlfriend." The

more primacy Sara grants “girlfriend,” the less she has for “dancing.” Mathematically speaking, these selves seem to vary indirectly. The dichotomies I’ve presented from Andrew’s and Andrea’s stories consist of selves that exist in the absence of one another. In Sara’s case, the gradual acquisition of one self is the gradual loss of another.

Although these three authors present dichotomized selves particular to their respective narratives, they all utilize a dichotomy between “then” and “now.” Each author ends the narrative with some reference to “now,” usually contrasting it to the past as articulated in the rest of the narrative. Andrea’s final lines demonstrate this dichotomy:

I’ve been shaken, stirred, thrown on the rocks, straight up. But at least I know where I stand now.

Despite this shared “now” reference at the end of each narrative, none of the three authors waits until the end to refer to “now.” One pattern I found with respect to these “now” references was in their placement. In many cases, the author would reference “now” at the end of a paragraph. Sara ends the third paragraph of her narrative with one such reference:

Now when I go to the ballet I not only pay attention to the story line, but the way that the motivations of the movement are used to interpret the emotions of the characters.

Similar usage can be found in both Andrew’s and Andrea’s narratives. I believe the authors foreground the now so as to establish a narrating self. This self is certainly dichotomized with respect to the foregrounded selves of whatever “then” exists at the given point in the narrative. In as much as this self exists in dichotomy, it functions similarly to other selves. The fact that the narratives end with the assertion of this “now”

self, however, makes it a particularly important for the issue of interactional emergence, which I explore in Chapter 4.

### *A Multiplicity of Self*

The authors of the three narratives foreground a multiplicity of self, wherein each self exists with respect to a particular point in the story. While the previous section points to the dichotomized nature of many of these selves, not all selves are situated exactly this way. This multiplicity exists in the surface existence of more than one self. I certainly do not intend to quantify selves here. I will argue that the authors foreground different selves to speak to particular situated experiences. These selves are at once a part of and separate from the narrating self. This multiplicity allows the authors to position selves with respect to one another and to the audience. As a result, each author becomes multivocal, resisting the enactment of a single, univocal self.

Sara and Andrea present two very different pictures of this multiplicity of self. Whereas Sara uses several selves to tell her story, Andrea relies on fewer. Within this lesser number, however, Andrea plays with the interaction between these selves, drawing to the surface the tension that exists between present and past selves' ability to speak to different situations.

Andrea establishes her multivocality largely through her use of personal pronouns. Depending on the moment in the narrative, Andrea might refer to a self using the first-person "I" or "me," or the third person "she" or "her." These shifts allow her to establish proximity between different selves, give interactive voice to selves, and bring to the surface the tense relationship between past and current selves.

While foregrounding her adolescent “know-it-all” self, Andrea uses “she” and “her.” Through this pronoun use, Andrea distances this self from her narrating self:

She was to be labeled A.W.O.L. Little did I know, though, or care at the time.  
[new paragraph] The question now on my mind is, “Will she ever come back?” And can she make a comeback? Because for all her arrogance, I miss her.

The third person pronoun allows Andrea to speak to and about this self. She is able to address this self as something other than a constitutive element of her narrating self.

These selves are removed from each other so much so that Andrea addresses her adolescent self as though she were not present at all—“A.W.O.L.”

Later in her narrative, Andrea describes the shift from this adolescent self to college-age self. As noted earlier, this self is the other side of the “know-it-all” adolescent. For the majority of the narrative, Andrea uses the first person pronoun to describe this self. As opposed to the adolescent self, this self becomes much more tangibly connected to the narrating self. But in the final two paragraphs of the narrative, Andrea uses the third person pronoun to describe both the adolescent self and the college-age self:

So maybe Confidence had left me. I had also left adolescence, though. And they were good partners, friends, and buddies.  
[new paragraph] But I had made a new friend in Fear. And in getting to know her, I had found my grounding. I’ve been shaken, stirred, thrown on the rocks, straight up. But at least I know where I now stand.

Here, Andrea equates adolescence with “Confidence” and college with “Fear.” When I first read the word “Confidence,” I wondered whether the capitalization was a mistake. After reading “Fear,” I concluded that this capitalization was not unintentional. The words “Confidence” and “Fear” become glosses for past selves. Andrea addresses these past selves as voices deserving of capitalized titles. If there were any question as to

whether the initial pronoun usage might be attributed to the difference in age between the narrating self and the adolescent self, this capitalization lends grounds for insight. While the difference in time might have made it easier for Andrea to use the third person pronoun to refer to her adolescent self and the first person pronoun to refer to her college-age self earlier in the narrative, her use of “Confidence” and “Fear” mark a shift. Now, both the adolescent and college-age selves are treated with third person pronouns. The first person pronoun is reserved for the narrating self, which is now differentiated from the college-age self. Thus, the “self” to which the first person pronoun is attributed shifts even within the narrative.

This shifting pronoun use might lead one to believe that the characters in the narrative are not defined as clearly as they could be. The narrating self actually confronts this issue in the fourth paragraph:

She was a stellar one, for sure. Cocky, confident, but also naïve in a very endearing way that was her blessing...and maybe her (my) one saving grace.

Here, Andrea brings to the surface the tension between past and present selves. She parenthetically wonders whether to lay current claim to a past self. Far from delegitimizing her presentation, I believe that Andrea’s continuing struggle with definition of selves is an important challenge to univocality. By shifting pronoun usage throughout her narrative, Andrea unsettles, or *troubles* the drive toward the maintenance of a single voice. She works to assert several voices throughout the narrative, even allowing for the narrating voice to tell the story differently at different points within the narrative.

Sara’s story also troubles univocality, but she differs from Andrea in the number of selves she uses to achieve this effect. Sara presents at least five surface selves. Here, I

refer to “surface” selves as those to which the narrator attributes a repeated name: dancer, student, teacher, girlfriend, daughter, and friend. None of these selves ever dominates the narrative, and each of them takes on different qualities with respect to different situations. Andrea and Andrew also assert a multiplicity of self in their narratives, but their selves aren’t named to the extent that Sara’s are. In addition to these surface selves, Sara ventriloquates dance teachers, parents, friends, boyfriends, and grandparents to give rise to other selves. Each time she quotes one of these characters, she allows her narrating self to speak with respect to the positioning of the quote. Sara also uses these quotes to assert new selves. The words of her dance teachers, parents, friends, and boyfriends all imply dance student, daughter, friend, and girlfriend selves for Sara. These selves firmly establish Sara’s multivocality.

### *Conclusion*

Andrew, Sara, and Andrea all use multiple selves to tell their stories. These selves allow the narrator to assert multivocality. With this multivocality, the narrator is free to tell stories that are situated within a particular narrative. This is important because it emancipates the narrator from the restrictions involved in presenting a seemingly univocal story. In a univocal narration, the narrator must tell the story apart from a situated context. The narrator is no longer a subjective participant in situated activity, but an objective narrator of events without context. In these autobiographies, the narrators clearly assert multiple selves, whether marked by surface names, pronouns, ventriloquation, or other means. These differing pathways toward multivocality lay the foundations for the telling of firmly situated narratives.

## *Chapter 4: Emergent Selves*

### *Introduction*

As an autobiographical narrator tells their story through the assertion of different selves, an untold interaction takes place outside the confines of the printed page. The narration is necessarily framed with respect to a particular context. This context affects the ways in which the narrator frames the story, and the narrator also affects this context. The interaction between narrator and context, or narrator and audience, accounts for some of the ways in which text and world interact. The narrator's selves are positioned not only with respect to one another, but also with respect to the audience. As the narrator foregrounds particular selves, they assert themselves with respect to the audience. The result of this interaction is the emergence of the narrator as some particular multiplicity of the selves; they assert this multiplicity throughout the story. In this chapter, I will describe the ways in which the different authors negotiate this emergence.

### *Foregrounding Selves*

Each of the narrators foregrounds a particular self the beginning of their story. I believe this process is important in that it sets up a framework for emergence. None of these initial selves matches up with the selves that emerge at the end of the narratives. Depending on the way in which the narrator negotiates emergence, the initial self is more or less similar to the final emergent self.

At the beginning of their narratives, Andrew and Andrea both present past selves. In Andrew's case, this presentation comes in the form of a story he wrote when he was in

second grade. As mentioned earlier, Andrew's narrative centers on his experiences learning to read and write. The narrator ventriloquates the voice within the second grade writing sample to situate this past in a particular way with respect to the rest of the narrative. This self takes on a role of primacy in that the narrator draws a connection between it and the self that emerges at the end of the story.

The self that Andrea initially asserts functions similarly to that in Andrew's narrative. She foregrounds a past self. In Andrea's case, however, pronoun usage marks a clearer split between this past self and the narrating self than in Andrew's narrative. This self interacts with other selves to create meta-emergence. By situating this initial self with respect to a particular time (adolescence), she can separate it from selves that exist before and after this time. Meta-emergence occurs during the initial transition from adolescence. I refer to this process as meta-emergence because the primary emergence represents the narrator's end position with respect to the audience. Although this meta-emergence alone does not constitute the primary emergence, the selves involved in it are constitutive of primary emergence. I will elaborate on this primary emergence later in this chapter. Here, I only intend to establish the importance of the author's initial assertion of some self.

The self Sara initially foregrounds is much less clearly differentiated from the narrating self. In Andrew's and Andrea's cases, age is a clear measurement by which to separate the narrating self from the self the narrator initially foregrounds. Sara gives no clues as to the age of the self she foregrounds. She ventriloquates the voice of a dance teacher to foreground some sort of a dancing/student self. She gives no clues as to her age or location with during this teacher-student interaction. In any case, this foregrounded self is not entirely unlike the final, emergent self. This might appear problematic in that,

after foregrounding this voice, she goes on to narrate an entire story. If the self she foregrounds initially is not so different from the primary emergent self, then the story might be regarded as inconsequential. I would argue that this emergent self could not exist without the context provided by the rest of the story. As much as the primary emergent self might clearly incorporate features of this initial self, it could not emerge without context. The self Sara foregrounds initially, then, is crucial in its relation to other selves that will participate in meta-emergence. This said, Sara's narrative certainly stands out as a case in which the self she foregrounds initially is not clearly a self from which she will eventually emerge.

Sara, Andrea, and Andrew all ventriloquate different voices at the beginning of their narratives, thus foregrounding particular selves. In Andrew's and Andrea's cases, these initial selves are clear-cut participants in the overall emergence. Sara's narrative, however, opens with her foregrounding a self that is not markedly different from the primary emergent self. Nonetheless, each author's initial self relates directly to the emergent self.

### *Establishing an Extra-textual Context*

The process of emergence necessarily involves some relationship with respect to the audience. I do not mean to imply that emergence necessitates some previously established relationship (in the standard sense) between author and audience. This relationship exists within the context of the authors' use of interactional cues. The authors of the autobiographical narratives speak to the audience both directly and indirectly. In speaking to the audience, the authors establish relational grounds for emergence.

I believe that the entire narrative is, by nature, interactional. The author allows different selves to interact with one another to constitute a multivocal narrating self. During this interaction, the author might not address an audience directly, but the text is shot through with indirect interactional cues such as the exchanges between the author's selves. These selves come to exist not only with respect to each other and the narrating self, but also the audience. Each author's telling of their narrative is situated within a context. An audience will always be one part of this context.

While these indirect interactional cues are not easily demonstrated, the authors also use direct cues. In the case of direct cues, I can point to specific quotes through which the author interacts with the audience. The three authors in this study use these direct cues very differently from one another. For example, I can only find one place where Andrew addresses the audience directly:

And you know what they say: "If you can't get 'em, make 'em."

The "you" in the first part of the quote serves as the direct interactional cue. Even in this case, it's questionable as to whether the "you" is idiomatic or actually interactional. Andrew's sparse use of direct interactional cues does not necessarily imply his failure to interact with the audience. I believe that, regardless of whether he uses direct cues, he can't help but interact with the audience through the positioning of selves (among other autobiographical narrative features).

In contrast to Andrew, Andrea and Sara utilize less contentious direct interactional cues throughout their narratives. Andrea uses the second person pronoun, "you," to continually reach out to the audience. She uses this as early as the third sentence in her narrative:

Ah, the tragic words of the know-it-all adolescent, for whom it would soon become apparent that she really did *not* know it all! That person, inside of you (and most definitely inside of me!) reared her beautiful-ugly-tragic head like it was nobody's business, no one was going to tell her anything!

Andrea not only speaks directly to the audience in the second line of this quote—she assumes collectivity in the experience with a particular self. In this case, Andrea describes “that person,” the “know-it-all adolescent,” as existing “inside of you.” She encourages the audience to identify with her in foregrounding this self. At the same time, her parenthetical comment reveals her unwillingness to assume particular experiences on behalf of the audience. She uses the parenthetical comment to remind the audience that she can only speak in definite terms with respect to her own selves. This cue is a careful invitation to the audience to find a way in which to identify with the narrator.

In other uses of direct cues, Andrea goes as far as to poke fun at her tendency to speak to the audience:

You, or rather I, learned that life is not as simple or easy once you turn 18, once you start to begin living on your own (or something like that), start working or begin college.

Here, Andrea uses direct cues (personal pronouns) at the beginning of and throughout the sentence. The subordinate clause, “or rather I,” raises questions about Andrea's audience. It might appear as though Andrea is equating “you” with “I.” If this were the case, the “you” might be just another name for the narrating self. The previous quote, in which Andrea addresses the audience as “you,” makes this scenario seem unlikely. Andrea's use of “we” further substantiates this claim:

“Now put it together and what do we get?! Take a deep breath, now, exhale, and force it out because I know you've got it in you: UGH!!

I take this “we” to mean the audience and Andrea. This usage is similar to the above quote in the assertion of a shared experience. As opposed to conflating “you” and “I,” I propose that Andrea is poking fun at the resistance she senses as she addresses the

audience directly. In writing “you,” Andrea seems to realize that she’s not supposed to enact this interactional voice. Despite this resistance, she continues to utilize “you” throughout the narrative. This commitment might speak to its effectiveness as a tool for narrative interaction with the audience.

### *Arranging Emergence*

As the authors foreground different selves, they lay the foundation for continual emergence throughout the narratives. In many cases, one self leads directly to the emergence of another. Andrea’s adolescent know-it-all seems to give rise to the emergence of a post-adolescent, self-conscious college student. In other cases, the transitions are not as clear-cut. In Sara’s narrative, daughter/dancer/student selves give rise to a self that consists of all of these with an additional “teacher” self:

I would dress up in costumes and show my mom how to hold her arms and turn as I had observed her do so many times. Thus I define an important stage of literacy to be the point at which the student becomes comfortable being the teacher.

Unlike Andrea, Sara foregrounds several selves here. In this context, there is no easy way to encapsulate either the initial or emergent selves. Whether simple or complex, though, each narrator arranges moments of emergence. The focus in this section is on the authors’ arrangement of the primary emergence, as opposed to the meta-emergence discussed in this paragraph.

In Andrea’s primary emergence, she initially foregrounds her college-age, fearful self. This self, upon reading a word she doesn’t know, questions whether she should ask another college student for help:

So I sucked up my courage, took a deep breath, turned my head to the side, exhaled. And I asked the lovely girl next to me, “Excuse me, but do you now what this word means?”  
[new paragraph] She was quite lovely. And you know what? She sheepishly admitted that she did not have a clue as to what this high faluttin’ word meant!

[new paragraphy] And it was then that I breathed a sigh of relief. Ahhhhh!! Deep satisfaction, I could now relax!

The fearful college-age self, which previously emerged from the over-confident adolescent self, finds contentment in this interaction. Shortly thereafter, in the last two sentences of the narrative, Andrea asserts her primary emergent self:

I've been shaken, stirred, thrown on the rocks, straight up. But at least I know where I now stand.

Andrea presents her emergent self as the best of both worlds, or *selves*, as it were. She gains perspective from both her over-confident adolescent and her fearful college age selves. In the end she confidently claims to be “straight up” and to “know where [she] now stand[s].” These statements characterize the emergent self as confident and active. The emergent self suffers from the downfalls of neither the over-confident nor the fearful self. Andrea thus emerges as the hero of her story. This emergence is not bound to the text, however, as Andrea also claims this active self in relation to an audience. The emergent self takes on a new voice that is situated within a given context. Andrea uses her autobiographical narrative to assert this emergent self as the voice of “now.” She defines this self on her terms and thus empowers herself in the greater interaction.

As opposed Andrea's seemingly rigid shifts between particular selves, Sara presents her primary emergence as a negotiation of various selves,. In Chapter 3, I described the tension between Sara's “girlfriend” and “dancer” selves. As Sara transitions out of this particular “girlfriend” relationship, she is forced to rebuild her dancer self. She does this by enrolling in an intensive dance camp in the summer following the break-up. During the course of this camp, Sara not only rebuilds, but redefines her dancer self. In this primary emergence, Sara comes to view her dancer self as acutely aware:

Little by little I developed sensitivity to every twist and turn and bend and flex that my body could and did do simultaneously. I was becoming literate in the movements of my body...I now know when my back is straight, when my foot is pointed or flexed, when my hips are aligned, when my feet are parallel or turned out, and when my shoulders are down. Now my goal is to forget all that and just dance...Today I see the study of dance as a pathway to understanding and connecting with other cultures.

The dancer self that emerges here is different from the younger, “student” dancer and even the older, “just learning again” dancer. In describing the understanding and the goals of the primary emergent dancer self, Sara calls upon several past selves. The current dancer self necessarily relates to previous dancer selves. Sara’s reference to “understanding and connecting with other cultures” hearkens back both to her daughter self and cultural acclimator self, which she foregrounds earlier in the narrative. Her mother, a dancer, used dance to connect with different cultures. Sara’s assertion of this aspect of dance calls upon the relationship to her mother that exists within her daughter self. This cultural component of dance also calls upon Sara’s cultural acclimator self. This is a self that Sara foregrounds earlier in the narrative. The cultural acclimator self allows Sara to quickly pick up dance techniques of other cultures. These two selves are thus clearly a part of Sara’s primary emergent self.

Sara’s primary emergent self calls upon not only clearly defined past selves, but also other meta-emergent selves. For example, as Sara begins to dance again after breaking up with her boyfriend, she emerges as what I might call a “born again” dancer. This self is not clearly defined, but she foregrounds her experiences in this dance camp as she describes her primary emergent self. This is one way in which the primary emergent dancer self is different from past dancer selves. I believe that Sara’s ability to redefine herself as dancer is a crucial aspect of her interactive emergence. She asserts this new definition with respect to her experiences dancing in the past, times without dance, and

learning to dance again. Sara is empowered in the assertion of this newfound definition. Like Andrea, this empowerment allows Sara to emerge as an active, multivocal self with respect to the audience.

Andrew arranges both space and time to set the scene for his primary emergence. Within the first paragraph of his narrative (excluding his second grade story, which consists of two paragraphs placed at the beginning of the narrative), he describes himself at birth, six months, and then skips to seven years. I believe this jump in age can be attributed to Andrew's focus on school as a major site in his narrative.

Andrew foregrounds pre-school, kindergarten, first, and second grade selves as budding readers and writers. The primary emergence occurs within the context of the story Andrew presents at the beginning of his narrative. This story, written by Andrew's second-grade self and published for everyone in his school and surrounding schools to see, contained a typographical error. Andrew's primary emergence takes place largely in reaction to this typo. The primary emergent self speaks to this situation:

This truth taught me two lessons. One was the finality of the printed word. There is no going back, no fixing things, no erasing the slate board to make my "G" look a little better. Not only does the printed word stand for something, but it stands indefinitely... [new paragraph, final sentence of the narrative] Not only will I never forget this incident, but I will never stop feeling ashamed of it.

Andrew's emergent self is much unlike those of Andrea and Sara in that he does not seem to take on an active position. In describing himself as ashamed at the end of his narrative, Andrew is not the hero of his story. He has not gained perspective so that "now" is objectively better than the past. In fact, it might be said that Andrew simply wishes that he didn't have to emerge from this incident at all. His emergent self might thus be characterized as regretful and apprehensive.

It is also possible, however, to argue that Andrew actively claims this shame. He regrets his mistake, yes, but the current self is somehow better informed because of it. More than making the best out of a bad situation, it could be said that Andrew concurrently situates himself within and distances himself from past selves. Andrew's concluding lines mark the future tense (with respect to the narrating "now" self), which is the only time this occurs in these three narratives. He asserts a claim to not only an emergent self, but also future selves. While I believe the nature of Andrew's assertiveness is markedly different from Andrea's and Sara's, his narration gives rise to a self that exists with respect to past, present, and future selves. As regretful or full of shame Andrew's emergent self might be, he's also assertive enough to stake a claim in the future. I believe that this shift allows Andrew to explore a new self with respect to the audience.

### *Conclusion*

Andrew, Sara, and Andrea all foreground multiple selves to negotiate meta-emergence as well as a primary emergence. Their different selves interact in particular ways in relation to one another, but they all result in an interactive emergence. This primary emergence takes place both in the words on the page and in the interaction with the audience. Each author's assertion of multiple selves and primary emergence allows them to position themselves in particular ways with respect to the audience. The ability of autobiographical narrative to accommodate multiple selves and emergences allows the author to chart their own, empowered course.

## *Chapter 5: Discursive Qualities of Autobiographical Narrative*

### *Introduction*

In Chapters 3 and 4, I analyzed the constitution of self and the emergent interaction between self and audience in autobiographical narrative. While I focused specifically on the individual authors in Chapter 3, and the emergent interaction between author and audience in Chapter 4, I will use this chapter to look at the interdiscursive features involved in this particular application of autobiographical narrative. I would characterize this as a macro-level analysis. Although this analysis might seem distant from the authors and the audience, it is important in that it helps address the ways in which social relations are constituted with respect to orders of discourse (and vice versa). I characterize this level of analysis as critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992b). I will argue that autobiographical narrative poses a challenge to the hegemonic order of academic discourse. The authors' assertion of multivocality serves as resistance to the objective, univocal voices encouraged in traditional academic writing. Despite these resistant tendencies, the narratives incorporate many traditional features of academic writing. The interrelation between orders of social practice and orders of discourse implies this hegemonic effect on autobiographical narrative used in academic spaces. On the other hand, it also implies the potential for resistant genres to encourage the reconstitution of orders of discourse, and, by extension, the social relations therein.

### *Argumentation*

The authors use a variety of written techniques to tell their stories. Sara's and Andrew's stories include transitions that span several years, whereas Andrea describes events that occur within a few years of one another. The stories include transitions in time, space, and self. I believe that one characteristic of these texts is their author's use of analytical reasoning. This is a particularly important feature because the assignment does not necessarily call for this type of reasoning. Moreover, analytical cues are characteristic of the dominant written discourse. I believe that the authors feel inclined to use these dominant tools to legitimize a writing form that doesn't necessarily require them.

Each of the three authors uses the analytical tool of argumentation in their narrative. By argumentation, I mean the use of logic to support a claim. Sara uses argumentation to legitimize her emergent self. This self has a newfound appreciation for dance, yet Sara describes the ways in which this interest is connected to previous selves. The weight of the dominant written discourse asks Sara to reconcile any incongruities with respect to past and present selves.

Andrew also uses argumentation to describe his selves. Andrew learns to read at home and school. He tells of the differences between these two settings, namely the freedom he felt at home and the pressure at school. In one transition, Andrew seeks to build a bridge between home and school success:

Supposedly, the more outside, independent reading (and writing) a child does, the more literacy achievement they will experience in school.

After this sentence, Andrew tells of his literacy immersion at home and eventual school success. I think this sentence is one of the most interesting in this entire project. Here, Andrew uses what I'll call folk-science. I don't think the claim itself is as important as the way in which he presents it. I get the sense that Andrew has heard someone make this claim before, but he doesn't necessarily know the scientific details involved. Despite the lack of absolute certainty, Andrew's story implies his belief in this claim; his experiences line up nicely with it. At the same time, Andrew places the word "supposedly" at the beginning of the sentence. This word is indicative of the scientific status of the claim. Because Andrew does not necessarily have evidence from experiments or research, he cannot present this claim as hard truth. I believe that the dominant written discourse encouraged Andrew to incorporate scientific claims into his narrative. These claims are often used in dominant academic writing to support arguments. Andrew uses scientific evidence to validate his experiences. As much as the dominant discourse seems to encourage Andrew to rely on this reasoning, his use of the word "supposedly" marks a challenge to this discourse. If Andrew is attempting to legitimize his experiences via argumentation, he should use language that is as objective as possible. In this case, the word "supposedly" challenges the legitimacy of the claim, and, by extension, its legitimization of his experiences. Andrew's language use here might signal the struggle between different orders of discourse. On one hand, the dominant written discourse encourages the use of science. But the current narrative allows Andrew to challenge the very objectivity on which these scientific claims are founded. While it's difficult to say whether Andrew's language use here perpetuates or challenges the dominant written

discourse, I don't think this type of assessment is as important as the presence of a discursive struggle.

### *Style*

The authors' argumentation points to a struggle between orders of discourse. Another mark of this struggle is the style used in autobiographical narrative (See the methodology for the definition of style I use here). In particular, the features of tenor and mode vary with respect to the ways in which the authors relate to the audience. Andrea uses an informal tenor, while Andrew is more formal. On another level, mode, Andrea writes as though she were speaking, while Andrew and Sara generally adhere to formal rules of writing.

Andrea's narrative stands out as an untraditional use of writing. Here are some of the untraditional features she uses:

#### Punctuation:

How was I supposed to know, really that I had to change the game plan?!? Osmosis? Mitosis?! Pshah! I'm not clairvoyant, you know?!!

#### Paragraph Shifts:

[new paragraph] I had seen the brilliance! The cockiness! The cocksure attitudes and the struts of haughty confidence! {new paragraph} I was cowed. [new paragraph] But what's one little spotted cow to do? I mooded. Politely [end of paragraph].

#### Direct Audience Address:

You know, being tutored by television...it is not the best medium is the least I can truthfully say.

#### Italics:

Life can and will *gleefully*—and with the thrills and frills of a circus freak show—throw you curve ball after curve ball.

#### Parenthesis:

That person, inside of you (and most definitely inside of me!) reared her beautiful-ugly-tragic head like it was nobody's business, no one was going to tell her anything!

### Spoken Utterance Transcription:

Ugh. Let me emphasize and reiterate: uuuuuuuuuuu-gggggggggggggggggggg-  
hhhhhhhhhhhh. Now put it together and what do we get?! Take a deep breath, now,  
exhale, and force it out because I know you've got it in you: UGH!!

This should give you some sense as to Andrea's language play. (These examples even demonstrate the variance of features that I have not specifically named.) These features do not commonly vary in traditional academic writing. I would describe the tenor of Sara's piece as informal and the mode as written-as-if-spoken. Not every author's use would fit into these same categories.

Andrew and Sara also use some language play in their narratives, but definitely not to the same extent as Andrea. I would characterize both of their narratives as informal, but the "written-as-if-spoken" characterization of Andrea does not apply here; Sara and Andrew both generally adhere to the standards of written academic work. At the same time, Andrea's extremely unconventional example might make Sara's and Andrew's writing look particularly conventional. Both of these authors use first person pronouns ("I" and "me") and self-quotes throughout their narratives. And Sara, like Andrea, plays with punctuation:

Why do I love movement so much? Is it genetic? ...Maybe. Is it because my mom is a dancer? ...Maybe. Is it because I am peppy with energy? ...Maybe.

This punctuation is rarely seen in traditional academic writing. The questions Sara poses in this quote are also uncharacteristic of academic writing. Even though Andrew and Sara do not stray as far from traditional academic writing as Andrea, they certainly incorporate features that distinguish their narratives from traditional academic writing.

## *Conclusion*

As these authors experiment with the genre of autobiographical narrative, they bring to the surface the struggle between different orders of discourse. Fairclough points to this struggle as the grounds for social change:

...change leaves traces in texts in the form of the co-occurrence of contradictory or inconsistent elements—mixtures of formal and informal styles, technical and non-technical vocabularies, markers of authority and familiarity, more typically written and more typically spoken syntactic forms, and so forth.

The differences between the narratives, as well as the differences within each narrative coincide with the inconsistent elements Fairclough describes here. It is difficult for me to quantify the ways in which the seeds of change are planted in these texts, but their innovatively (and, in many cases, unintentionally) resistant language use allows a glimpse of this change. I have shown the ways in which the authors struggle to find discursive boundaries, often juxtaposing dominant and resistant features. But the authors' failure to clearly utilize a single discourse is, in many ways, the focus of this discussion. The reshaping of orders of discourse is the link between text and world. As the authors define their writing space, they affect the relations between social selves at the structural level. While this chapter provides no clearcut presentation of the ways in which new social relations might result from this reshaping, it highlights the discursive struggle that signals the potential for these emancipatory ends.

### *Conclusions/Implications*

In this thesis, I have analyzed a particular application of autobiographical narrative to an academic space. I have used the tools of critical discourse analysis to look at the narrative self, emergence, and discursive resistance. This progression from micro- to macro-analysis illustrates the ways in which autobiographical narrative works with respect to different levels of discourse. In this conclusion, I will reiterate several key points from my analysis of each level. In terms of the constitution of self, I think the assertion of multivocality is the pivotal feature of these autobiographical narratives. Each author voices a multiplicity of selves, thus utilizing multivocality to narrate the story. For Andrea, this multivocality provides a means by which to actively resist the constraints of traditional academic writing. In addition to foregrounding different selves at different points in her story, she uses pronouns to question the composition of the different selves, including the narrating self. While Andrew and Sara also utilize this means for resistance, they tacitly resist univocality through their assertion of multiple selves. As the three authors position these multiple selves within the narratives, they also position themselves with respect to an audience. The authors foreground selves throughout the narratives to set up a scene of primary emergence. In each narrative, the author emerges as an assertive self. Sara and Andrea both become the figurative heroines of their stories, as the

emergent self represents an optimistic take on the present and, by extension, the future. Andrew's emergent self, although less positive than Sara's and Andrea's, asserts a favorable positionality with respect to the future. This interactive emergence can be viewed as the point at which the textual enters the social. The orders of discourse I analyzed in Chapter 5 explore this relationship between text and world. I argue that the authors use autobiographical narrative to resist the hegemonic confines of traditional academic writing. The imposition of features of traditional academic writing on these autobiographical narratives highlights the extent to which univocal, analytical writing occupies a hegemonic space of primacy in academics. This unsteady interplay between traditional and untraditional writing, the willingness and unwillingness to address an audience, and the general struggle between different discursive features challenges current orders of discourse and moves toward a framework for change. The three chapters of analysis demonstrate the dialogic relationship between individual subjects, audiences, orders of discourse, and structural social relations. It was difficult to analyze these different levels concurrently, but my neglect of any of them would leave my analysis incomplete.

### *Implications/Questions for Consideration*

As I take a step back and look at the context within which I completed this project, many questions arise. I wonder about the class for which these authors wrote their autobiographical narratives. Why was this the first paper that the students wrote in the class and not the last? Why is it my general experience that these projects are only used at the beginning of the semester? I wonder about the ways in which this type of

writing might be used throughout the semester, so that it would not be regarded as simply and introductory activity.

I also question the potential for tacit vs. active resistance. I'm not sure, but I don't think the professor of this class introduced these autobiographical assignments to their students as an opportunity to resist hegemonic orders of discourse. The idea of this might sound funny, but I believe the underlying question is important. Would it make a difference if the students actively regarded their writing as resistant? I think this might be a useful step on the road to change. Fairclough says that the "grounds for social change exist in the problematization of conventions for producer or interpreters." I think that autobiographical assignments are, to some extent, a reflection of this problematization. There is a way in which their method of production seems to be useful for professors in particular contexts. By problematizing the dominant written discourse, professors would encourage their students to develop what Fairclough calls a "critical language awareness" (Fairclough 1992b). This awareness involves inquiry into the ways in which individual language use affects social orders (on many levels) and vice versa. The development of this awareness might be a distant end, but I think a problematization of the current hegemonic written discourse is an important step.

A follow-up analysis of the functions of autobiographical analysis might be an additional consideration. In the class for which the analyzed narratives were completed, the students had the opportunity to read each other's writings. This shared reading is important in that it gives the students the opportunity to situate themselves within a larger, classwide social practice. This collectivity is another important feature of social change:

As producers and interpreters combine discursive conventions, codes and elements in new ways in innovatory discursive events, they are of course cumulatively producing structural changes in orders of discourse; and rearticulating new orders of discourse... (Fairclough 1992 p. 97).

I believe in this potential for change. I think that the opportunity to complete projects like these in academic spaces is invaluable.

During the completion of this project, I've constantly implicated this analysis within orders of discourse. It's been difficult to use dominant written structures in my own writing to point to the potential of other written forms to resist these structures. As much as I hope that this presentation reflects a situated author, I'm critical of its potential to do so. In practice, though, I am inspired by the knowledge that I had the opportunity to discuss these emancipatory ideas with countless individuals along the way. I can only hope that this will be a continuing and increasingly collective conversation.

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