

Michael Conry  
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### **Evolution of Identity**

It is not in the nature of man to be able to pick and choose what attribute of ourselves in which we do not like and be able to just delete it. We are more complex than that. We evolve and grow from a child into an adult and become that person through learning and experiences. Those learning experiences form the back bone of who we are, it provides our conscious with a way to analyze situations and provide ample support to come to a decision through our memories. Though sometimes it can be hard to connect with our learning experiences. Literacy narratives and Discourse provide a tool to connect to our experiences and better understand ourselves.

James Paul Gee is the Mary Lou Fulton Presidential Professor of Literacy Studies at the Arizona State University. He wrote and talked about the idea of Discourses. Gee says that “*A Discourse is a sort of “identity kit” which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize.*” He describes this idea further as the aspects of life that we generally group ourselves to, such as a sports team, job, religious group...etc. Every aspect of life can be linked to a Discourse. And with Discourse comes learning experiences. Bronwyn T. Williams is an English professor at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. He wrote a paper on literacy narratives. Williams says that literacy narratives are “*...assignments where students are asked to tell about and reflect upon their experiences with reading and writing...*” He uses narratives to connect his students to the experience in their past by assigning literacy narratives. Literacy narratives are a tool we can use to better understand and connect where we came from and the experiences with that, to figure out how to move forward. With literacy narratives and narratives in general you

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can connect them to a discourse you connected with while writing. And although we can change our discourse by changing our appearance, actions and who we affiliate with there is no way to truly change who we are underneath.

Gee talks about the idea of a primary Discourse, he says “*This initial Discourse, which I call our primary Discourse, is the one we first use to make sense of the world and interact with others.*” Primary Discourses are more than how we interact with others, its how we interact with everything. It’s our inner everyday thoughts, the things we keep to ourselves, and more importantly the things that makes every person different. It’s like our secret fingerprint, every person has it and it makes every person unique and indistinguishable. Your identity is something only you know truly. You have no control over it, you can’t change it and you never will be able to. To think you can is just pretending, shielding yourself from the truth of who you are. You may not like it, but your inner thoughts, morals and prayers are yours to do with that you want, but they will never go away. Every person has the privilege of choice and whether to act, and choice is very important which we all can reflect on through narratives.

Reflection through writing is one of the best tools to physically see your thoughts, to shed truth to your life about who you are. In Dannielle Usko’s narrative *I Hate Reading* she tells a story about her hate for reading so many books except Junie B. Jones. She revealed that the reason she loved those books was because Junie B seemed fearless, expressive, intelligent and motivated. Dannielle reveals her connection to the books by wanting to be like Junie. She reveals her true self as someone who wants to do things, to aspire to do things but is afraid to commit, afraid to be expressive, afraid to fail. Literacy narratives expose our true selves, if done correctly it should push us to expose our thoughts of ourselves and confront it as Dannielle did.

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Ronnie Mwai's *My Literacy Narrative* he begins by telling us a story of when he came to America. Being an extravert, he tells us about when he enrolled in school he thought he was more gifted than his peers. He had the confidence but lacked the motivation because his peers were doing well without trying hard, so why shouldn't he? He confronted his past to reveal that he is intelligent, athletic and an overall gifted student but believed he was too gifted to try because his peers weren't like him. He decided to blend in and just go with it and not truly try because of motivation. He pursued activities he found meaningful and fun and lacked in those he found uninteresting. After realizing this potential for greatness but lack of meaning to do it he decided to overcome his barriers and work hard as can each of us. He changed his Discourse to better his future, but he will always have those thoughts of "Why?" and "Is it worth it?" No one can rid themselves of these inner thoughts, they are our demons, our curse but like Ronnie you can overcome it through the choices you make.

It is an insult and injustice to everyone to just identify people by the group you align yourself with and the things you do and say. Every person is different in the way we analyze situations and react to those situations. No one can truly change how they think, not in a meaningful way. But you can confront these thoughts through narratives. It is only truly beneficial to the writer to confront their inner self, it will help them connect and change if necessary for the better.

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