

# At the Intersection of Feminism and Fast Capitalism: A Study of Women's Literacies During a Time of Change

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AT THE INTERSECTION OF FEMINISM AND FAST CAPITALISM: A STUDY OF  
WOMEN'S LITERACIES DURING A TIME OF CHANGE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term  
2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research in socio-historical studies of literacy have focused on the social and historical aspects of literacy. While these prior studies have illuminated how we think about the social and historical context surrounding literacy, we have not studied women's literacies in relation to the economy as much. In response, this study focuses particularly on women's literacies during a specific time period, that of the 1960s to the 1990s, which ushered in second wave feminism's fight for equality in the workplace and the change from traditional capitalism to "fast" or "new" capitalism. To develop this inquiry, and find out about women's literacies during this historic intersection, I drew from Brandt and Berteaux's life history interview method paired with Charmaz's grounded theory to conduct literacy history interviews with seven women of varying occupations. All the participants started their working lives between 1960 and 1966 and continued to work at least through the 1990s.

Findings show that women used their literacies to document in our society, which demanded increasing documentation, in order to get and keep positions of authority. Some women used a keen sense of audience awareness and ethos to gain the authority to write their own work beyond documentation. These women are the boundary breakers who succeeded in occupations previously dominated by men. The participants' literacies are complicated, however, and it was interesting to find that their education levels did not always match their economic levels. Two of the participants achieved upper echelon positions and earned more than most of the others despite not having degrees. Graff's, "The Literacy Myth", helps explain this paradox,

but my research adds an additional contour to his theory by looking at how women used literacies gathered from various sources to gain authority in a documentary workplace.

While researchers like Brandt and Graff have done global literacy studies, this study hones in on the complications and particularities of women's literacies during the convergence of two socio-historic trends, feminism and fast capitalism. This study highlights how women used their literacies in a documentary society to gain authority in the workplace. This research also sheds light on the part literacy played in women's ability to succeed in professions previously dominated by men. Understanding the results of this study could help us better understand the paradoxes of women's literacies and work as well as how women have managed these paradoxes when possible. Most importantly, this research sheds light on literacies in our fast capitalist, documentary society, which is a defining feature of our contemporary moment.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would first like to thank my mother, Rosemary Barton for her inspiration. Our conversations provided the basis of this research. You have been a role model not only for Jennifer and me, but for many women.

I would also like to thank the professors on my thesis committee. Dr. Angela Rounsaville, thank you for your magical guidance. You nurtured and challenged me at the same time. I couldn't have asked for a better mentor. Dr. Kevin Roozen, I've always considered you to be the teacher's teacher. I am honored that you have been my cheering section. Dr. Mark Hall, you know me better than I know myself. Thank you for challenging me and believing in me.

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## INTRODUCTION

My mother told me the story of her start as a secretary on Wall Street in 1962. Like most women, she wasn't allowed to write. She simply typed what a man dictated. By the end of her career in 1998, however, she retired as vice-president of the largest independent insurance agency in Pennsylvania, and she was the one doing the writing. She was the one who taught my husband the insurance business. Ironically enough, she had a high school diploma, and later earned the highest certification in the insurance industry. My husband needed a college degree in order to get an entry-level position. Times, and literacies, had changed indeed. My mother's story highlights the socio-historic changes that began in the 1960s. Women went to college and back to work. At the same time, the workplace changed as well.

Starting in the 1960s, Second Wave Feminism propelled women from jobs that had been considered traditionally "women's work" such as housekeeping, laundry services, secretarial, teaching and nursing to finance and management positions, as well as medical and law practices. Gloria Steinem passionately argues that women work for various reasons, not just because we have to, but for personal satisfaction and achievement. She also is adamant that society needs the talents of all people (270). She writes,

It was this kind of waste of human talents on a society-wide scale that traumatized millions of unemployed or underemployed Americans during the Depression. Then, a one job per household rule seemed somewhat justified, yet the concept was used to displace women workers only, create intolerable dependencies, and waste female talent that the

country needed. That was Depression experience, plus the energy and example of women who were finally allowed to work during the manpower shortage created by World War II, led Congress to reinterpret the meaning of the country's full employment goal in its Economic act of 1946. (Steinem 273)

As Steinem points out, women wanted to work, even those with husbands who could support them, which was something unheard of in the past. Steinem argues that women who work, even though they don't have to in order to support themselves, are at the forefront of the fight for women's right to work (275). In this research, the data shows that the participants largely needed to work, but they also wanted to work. Many of the women interviewed for this research bear out Steinem's arguments because they wanted to make more contributions to society and the workplace than traditional "women's work", such as secretarial work, allowed.

At the same time the participants and many other women were headed to college and the workplace, the workplace itself changed. Society shifted from "Traditional Capitalism" or "Fordism" to "Fast Capitalism" as Gee and Lankshear point out (90-91). Traditional Capitalism, according to Gee and Lankshear, was based on the mass production of goods by large hierarchically structured corporations serving a commodities-starved, but progressively richer post World War II population in the 'developed' world. Workers were not required to think, but to serve their part in making goods, without understanding the entire process. "New," "Post", or "fast capitalism," according to Gee and Lankshear, is based on production and marketing of 'high quality' goods in a market that is already saturated. Customized goods and services are made for 'niche markets,' or groups who define and change their identities according to the

goods and services they consume. Active knowledge and flexible learning is valued in “New” or “Fast” Capitalism. Competition for quality goods is globalized. Workplaces are more locally flavored even if they are large, and hierarchy is flattened (Gee and Lankshear 84).

Workers who can work with information such as those in insurance, finance, and banking are enchanted workers, or knowledge workers. These knowledge workers are treated as partners with all the responsibilities that come with management and are well paid. According to Gee and Lankshear, those who don’t work with information and knowledge are “disenchanted” workers. These “disenchanted” workers are often less valued and therefore relegated to shift and seasonal work with low pay (Gee and Lankshear 88).

It is interesting to me that Second Wave Feminism’s fight for equality in education and the workplace took place during the same time as the change from traditional capitalism to fast capitalism. Neither second wave feminism nor fast capitalism happened in isolation, but in tandem. Both trends began at around the same time, during the 1960s and 1970s, and changed our economy, our literacies, and our lives. The intersection of feminism and capitalism impacted women’s literate lives, but how exactly? I was prompted to look into the intersection of these socio-historic movements as I listened to the stories of my mother, her friends, and other women their age.

There is already much scholarly work about literacy and women’s literacies. This study is situated in socio-historical literacy studies such as the work of Brandt, Graff, and Hull who look at the impact of the social upon literacy practices. My research began with Brandt, Graff and Hull and continues in line with their socio-historic view of literacy. In order to answer my questions about literacy during the historical transformations of feminism and fast capitalism,

and understand women's positionality during that time, I chose a socio-historical approach to literacy research with special attention to the participants' life stories.

The socio-historical approach to understanding literacy is defined by understanding literacy not as an isolated skill, but part of larger social, historical and material systems. The research of Brandt, Graff and Hull challenges our ideas of how literacy is learned, and how it affects our economic mobility. All three researchers have found that literacy is only one part of a larger material, cultural and historical system, and so its impact upon individuals' economic circumstances is complicated to understand (Brandt *The Rise of Writing* 5, Brandt *Literacy in American Lives* 2, Graff "The Literacy Myth at Thirty" 641 and Hull 8).

The socio-historical work of Brandt, Graff and Hull also challenges the idea of a "literacy crisis". All of these researchers argue that higher and higher levels of literacy are expected in our society, and so it isn't the case that people aren't literate. Instead, society expects higher levels of literacy within the workforce (Brandt, *Literacy in American Lives* 2, Graff "The Literacy Myth at 30" 640, Hull 4).

Graff sums up the complications inherent in popular beliefs about literacy seen by all these researchers in what he calls "the literacy myth." He argues that the literacy myth is the belief held by educational, religious and civic groups that literacy is a necessary prerequisite to cognitive development, economic and social mobility. Literacy stands alone as a critical and determinable variable. These beliefs have a long history, and are still articulated today in various forms ("The Literacy Myth at 30" 635). Researchers like Brandt, Graff, and Hull expose the literacy myth and expose literacy as one historical social variable among many in the everyday lives of people.

Graff takes a global view of literacy and argues that historically, literacy is and always has been misunderstood. Beliefs about literacy have been intertwined with post-enlightenment, liberal social theories and contemporary expectations of the role of literacy and schooling in socioeconomic development, social order and individual progress, but literacy in practical reality poses a lot of contradictions, which he calls the “literacy myth” (3). Graff argues that,

The tendency today, as earlier, is to blame the poverty, underemployment, low positions, and the like of such groups on a lack of literacy and educational achievement. However, blacks, convicts, and Hispanics are not poor, imprisoned, or unemployed solely because of their high likelihood of being illiterate; literacy is much more a result and reflection of other social and economic factors and a symptom or symbol of them than it is an independently contributing factor. Being literate provides no solution. (“The Literacy Myth at 30” 376-377)

In her work in, “Writing for a Living”, Brandt focused specifically on writing in what she refers to as the new knowledge economy and claims that writing is at the heart of the new knowledge economy (“Writing for a Living” 166). She also claims that it is more valuable than land, equipment or money, which is line with the research of Lankshear and Gee and Graff (Brandt, “Writing for a Living” 166).

In addition to the literacy studies of Brandt, Graff and Hull, and the workplace theory of Lankshear and Gee, feminism also plays an important role if we are to understand women’s

relationship to literacy. I suggest that we must understand the interplay between Second Wave Feminism and the changes in the workplace in order to more fully understand women's relationship to literacy and how it impacted their lives both in the workplace and within their private lives during the historical intersection of this study.

Weedon, Fraser, and Barrett provide a feminist lens in order to look at women's literacies in the workplace and understand capitalism's contested relationship with feminism. Although feminists chose to work within capitalism, these feminists contend that it hasn't been an easy or entirely satisfactory road to emancipation (Barrett 127, Fraser 3). Weedon's work provides a feminist worldview for the proposed study through an analysis of the ways in which language supports patriarchy and subjectivity (10).

While Weedon provides a feminist worldview, Fraser, Barrett and DeVoss delve into feminism's relationship to capitalism. In the first act of second wave feminism, feminists were also socialists, having shed light on the gender injustices deeply entrenched in capitalism. With the 1980s came a new capitalism and feminists were lured into identity politics and the idea of recognition therefore creating a feminist collusion with neoliberalism in what Fraser calls a cultural turn (Fraser 3). In other words, feminists worked to achieve equality within capitalism because of the new opportunities capitalism offered.

These feminist researchers ask the question of whether women can be liberated within capitalism (Barrett 124) and point to women's difficult working conditions as "pink collar" workers (DeVoss 250). Together, Weedon, Fraser and Barrett provide not only feminist theory, but a view of feminism's relationship to capitalism, which is an important strand of the historical context of this study.

This study draws on the literacy studies of Brandt, Graff and Hull, feminist studies of Weedon, Fraser, Barrett and DeVoss and workplace studies of Gee and Lankshear to examine a specific niche that has not been studied so far: women's literacies during the intersection of feminism and fast capitalism. This research, unlike that of Brandt Graff and Hull who all look at literacy from a more global perspective, will hone in specifically on women's literacies and shine some light on how women experienced that socio-historic intersection.

The thirty- year period from the 1960s to the 1990s and beyond impacted women's literacies and lives in ways that have still not been fully explored. Women's literacies at this historic intersection can only be understood by looking through a triangulation of socio-historic literacy studies, feminist theory and workplace literacy theory as women's writing of that time is intertwined with both feminism and fast capitalism.

My mother's story and those of women like her may bear witness to the part literacy played in their working lives during the 1960s through the 1990s. Today, we know that feminism and capitalism were contentious ideas that fueled movements and changed the world we live in, yet we only partially understand the implications of these two simultaneous social movements. In order to understand women's literacies during the period of from the 1960s to the 1990s, I must first define literacies to include, writing, communicating, speaking and reading. Then I ask the following research questions:

### Research Questions:

1. What is women's recollection of their literacies during the time of the social-historical intersection of women's fight for equality in the workplace and the transition from traditional capitalism to fast capitalism and the knowledge economy?
2. How did women's changing literacies impact their ways of being in the world?

Findings that emerged from the data suggest, and my main claim is here, is that women workers during the period of the 1960s to the 1990s and beyond, needed to work, and wanted to work to support their families and lifestyles. My participants recollect the need to earn a paycheck for their families, but also wanting to work. They took advantage of the new opportunities afforded them by Second Wave Feminism to enter a workplace that was changing from Fordism to fast capitalism. It was at this intersection of feminism and fast capitalism that they forged their own way in the workplace. This study suggests that women workers started out with no authority in the workplace, but gained it over time. They wrote their way into various positions of authority and trust as our society relied more and more on documentation and turned to fast capitalism. They all used their literacies to document as a means of securing their positions of authority. Some used their literacies and an acute awareness of audience and ethos to achieve upper echelon positions. The women who broke barriers started their careers with documentary writing like most other workers in a fast capitalist workplace. This study suggests their acute awareness of audience and ethos helped to propel them into positions previously

occupied by men, with authority to write beyond documentation. The findings of this study shed some light on the complications of women's writing in the workplace. Writing and authority are intertwined, but complicated by the specific jobs and literacies the participants worked within.

There were seven participants in this study. Five of those participants were divorced at some point during their working lives. Six of the seven had children. The one participant who neither married nor had children, Patricia, still found herself financially responsible for her sister's family. These women needed to work to support themselves and their families.

Rosemary, the one married participant who never divorced, was also the one participant who did not have to work. Even though she didn't have to work, she realized that in order to have the lifestyle she wanted and send her daughters to college, she needed to work. It is important here to note that although these women felt they needed to work, they also wanted to work. Secretarial positions were not enough for them. The gendered positions of the past such as secretarial work did not offer enough pay or prestige for many of these participants.

None of these women called themselves feminists except Ms. B. The label of feminism was not a concern to them, but they acted in feminist ways. These women divorced if they felt that was a choice they needed to make; and they made their own way in the world and the workplace. Their stories, and the conclusions we make from understanding their stories are not just important to women and feminists, but to everyone. Since that socio-historical intersection of feminism and fast capitalism, the workplace has changed, society has changed, gender roles have changed, and with them, our literacies. Perhaps this study can shed some light on the historical convergence that still impacts our lives today.

In order to explain the lives of the participants and my claims about their literate lives, this thesis is broken down three chapters. In chapter one the theory and methods used for the study will be further discussed. In the second chapter, I am going to show how three of the seven participants wrote their way into trusted positions of authority through using their literacies in our documentary society. In the third chapter, I will show how four of the participants achieved upper echelon positions through writing with an acute awareness of audience and ethos. These women broke boundaries and succeeded in professions previously dominated by men. Their literate lives and working lives were reflections of the time in which they began their careers. Their literacies, however, are not the only issue at play in their success within the workplace. Hard work, determination and their self-directed learning have their own parts to play in the participants' lives, a claim which bears out Graff, and his idea of the literacy myth, in which he claims that literacy is one factor within a number of other social and historical factors that determine a person's economic mobility. It is not the determining force (Graff, "The literacy Myth at 30" 635).

As Michele Barrett explains the feminist viewpoint of women's work and economics,

It would be a foolish and doctrinaire stance to deny the possibility of improvements and reform under capitalism. Bourgeois women have already effected a dramatic change in respect of their civil rights- to own property, to vote, stand for public office and enter the professions. These are sweeping changes, and a restructuring of the ideological and political parameters of women's situation is not inconceivable. It is perhaps less clear what changes we could expect in the case of working-class women. The 'double-shift' of

domestic labor and poorly paid wage labor is affected by variations in the strength of the capitalist economy. (128)

The working and writing lives of the participants bear out Barrett's idea. Women, including some of the participants in this research, have indeed made great strides. The lives and literacies of working women are still in question however. Working class women are still not paid as much as the women who broke boundaries as evidenced by the participants in this study. Indeed, there is still much work to be done to improve the lives and literacies of women. Perhaps this study can show us where we came from, and shed light on where we are going as women and as a society.

## CHAPTER ONE: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

In order to explore women's workplace literacies and answer the research questions, Brandt's theory, which she used in *The Rise of Writing, Literacy in American Lives* and "Writing for a Living" is useful. Past researchers believed that literacy cannot be understood without understanding the context and history in which it used. These researchers (Street, Heath, Scriber and Cole), studied literacy within small populations using an ethnographic approach in order to understand literacy and show that society's ways of being, knowing and doing impact how literacy is learned and used. Brandt too believes that literacy must be understood within the contexts of the social and historical. She however, is interested in looking at literacy as a resource, "Literacy is a resource in a way that electricity is a resource. Its circulation keeps lights on. Literacy is also a productive resource, a means of production and reproduction, including a means by which legacies of human experience move from past to future and by which, for many, identities are made and sustained". Brandt does not choose to study literacy within particular areas and populations but studies literacy on a more global level.

In order to use a social-historical lens to look at literacy on a global level, Brandt turned to the work of Bertaux, a sociologist. Bertaux was convinced that the only way to truly understand people's movements within social classes, was a life story approach. Surveys, which had been the favored methodology in the sociological field, simply couldn't provide all the information, all the nuances and historical and contextual pieces of the puzzle needed to understand how people move social classes. The life story approach allows a researcher to look at a large number of narratives to find commonalities. The life story approach also allows

researchers to find out what people's lives, experiences and histories say collectively about their questions. Berteaux explains that,

While the case study approach enables us readily to encompass underlying processes and the particularity of contexts which the survey discards from the field of observation, such an intensive approach cannot at the same time claim to statistical representivity. The road to generalization will therefore be a different one, although- especially if we bear in mind how few of the earlier classics used statistics- not necessarily less fruitful. (12)

Berteaux further explains the use of the "life story" or "case study" approach, "Case studies undoubtedly allow us to develop rich hypotheses about mobility processes; thus they are in harmony both with the classics of sociology and with its contemporary 'interpretive turn'" (13).

It is the life story theory Berteaux advocates that allows Brandt to look at literacy through a socio historic lens. For her work in both *Literacy in American Lives* and *The Rise of Writing*, Brandt chooses to gather a large number of narratives about literacy in order to form a theory or larger picture about how literacy works. She isn't interested in the individual stories, but rather, what they say collectively about literacy. She views her participants as witnesses to socio-historic change. She explains her theory in her work in *The Rise of Writing*,

As in Berteaux's work, *The Rise of Writing* treats research participants not so much as objects of study, but as witnesses to socio-historical change. Individuals and their stories are not my focus per se. Rather, what matters is what can be systematically and

objectively gleaned from them about how the history of mass literacy- past, present and future- manifests in particular times, places and social locations; how particular members of society enter into its force; and with what effects on them and others. (Brandt, *Rise of Writing 8*)

The life story approach that I chose for this research is in line with that of Bertaux and Brandt. The life story approach allows us to study the past and present literacies of population over time, which is something no other theory allows. Considering this research is supposed to look at women's literacies over time and is situated in the social and historical context of the time, the life story approach made sense for this study.

It is the idea of gathering life stories to find out what they collectively say about literacy that is the intent of this study. Unlike previous studies of Brandt, Hull and Graff, which were global studies that looked at a large number of life stories, media or history, this is a smaller study particular to women's literacies. The point of this research is to look at the literacies, of a specific group, women, to see what was going on during the convergence of second wave feminism and the rise of fast capitalism. Brandt's use of Bertaux's theory paired with Charmaz's grounded theory seemed to be the most appropriate way to do so. Using the life story, grounded theory approach allows for more details of the participants' literacies to be discovered within the historical and social contexts of their everyday lives. Most importantly, this combined approach allows the participants to tell their own stories, and the research to be based on what they reveal. In essence, the participants are co-creators of this research, something that was important to them and to me. Testing an already prepared theory was never the intention of this research.

### Data Collection And Reduction

In full disclosure, the inspiration for this research was my mother, Rosemary. She began her working life in 1962 as a secretary on Wall Street, became Vice-President of the largest insurance agency in Pennsylvania, and now at 71, owns her own business with my sister. I wanted to know more about her literacies and the literacies of other women who started their working lives during that same time. Since she was my inspiration, my mother also defined the people I needed as my participants. I wanted to study women who started their careers during the first half of the 1960s and continued to work at least through the 1990s. I hoped to find a wide range of women with varied occupations, ethnicities and races.

In order to find participants, I used a snowball method and asked my mother if she would find other participants for me. I also asked women from two different church groups who also fit the parameters of the study if they would also take part. I found one participant at a dog park. In total, there were seven participants. Two of the participants are teachers, one is a nurse, one a hotel executive, another an insurance executive, one a bookkeeper, and the last a lawyer. Since I am white and Roman Catholic, as is my mother, six out of the seven participants are also white and Roman Catholic. One participant, who I found at the dog park, is African American. It is my observation that using a snowball methodology can create a participant pool that reflects the observer.

Out of the seven participants, one has never been married, the lawyer. Of the six who were married, five have been divorced. All of these women have been in positions of having to support children, even the one who never married. This is significant in that these women all felt

that they needed to work to support themselves and their children. Even the one participant who remained married, Rosemary, felt that her family financially benefitted from her work. Each participant participated in a sixty to ninety minute interview. Two of the participants, Rosemary and Ms. B asked to extend their interviews. Each interview was then transcribed and went through layers of coding.

Originally, this study was supposed to include ten to twelve participants. There were at least two more participants ready to be interviewed. Due to constraints within the time given for thesis work, it was only possible to interview, transcribe, and analyze seven interviews.

#### Data Analysis:

As this study is in line with Brandt's research, I paired Bertaux's life story theory with Charmaz's version of grounded theory. Charmaz explains grounded theory as a means of allowing the theory to emerge from the data,

What are grounded theory methods? Stated simply, grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves. The guidelines offer a set of general principles and heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules. Thus, data form the foundation of our theory and our analysis of these data generates the concepts we construct" (2).

Part of grounded theory is the use of codes in order to analyze the data. There are many ways of coding, but here, initial codes, and then focused codes along with memos were helpful in understanding the participants' collective stories and what they had to say about literacy. Once all the manuscripts were transcribed, I made notes to distill what the participants were saying. The next round of coding involved initial codes. These codes used gerunds as way to find the action in what the participants were saying. Once that round of coding was done, I began to see what I thought of as trends. These trends were distilled into focused codes. Each focused code was assigned a color, and I went through the transcripts of looking for those focused codes within the interviews, and color coding where I saw evidence of the focused codes. In this case, I thought about the focused codes as forming themes as far as women writing their way into authority and women working in a documentary society. The next part was the most perplexing and surprising part. As I went through my color coded focused codes, I found that I disagreed with some of the focused codes I assigned and recoded them. I also found that some of my focused codes did not apply to all participants, but only a couple. After that, I wrote memos which distilled the color coded focused codes down even further. Throughout the process of coding, memo writing is imperative as a way for the researcher to gather thoughts and ideas about the data. Memos allow for connections and comparisons to be made. Charmaz views memo writing as an intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts (72). Charmaz argues that, "Through writing memos, you construct analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories. Start by developing your focused codes. Memos give you a space and place for making comparisons between data and data, data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept and for articulating conjectures about these

comparisons” (72). From the codes, memos and conversations with the participants and my thesis chair, Dr. Rounsaville, I was able to form theories about the participant’s writing lives. I included some of the initial and focused codes below in Table 1-1.

*Table 1-1 Samples of Coding 1*

<b>Participant Statements</b>	<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Focused Codes</b>
When I first started we could not put down that the patient was green say, or afraid. You had to write appears. You couldn’t make exact statements. He (Wall Street Partner) would dictate anything he wanted written and would just write what he dictated. The biggest thing is when I started out, you were never in a position where you were asked to write a letter or sign a letter. They (women lawyers) would be fired in a couple years because they were never given a responsibility. A girl had to stand back in the background and let the man speak because the man was intelligent. They looked at women like they didn’t have a good brain.	Writing without authority to diagnose, working to be taken seriously, lacking writing foundation, Working under poor conditions at the book company, Struggling as a woman in law school, Writing only dictation, Writing without creative authority,	<b>Writing without Authority</b>
<i>Table 1-1</i>		
<b>Participant Statements</b>	<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Focused Codes</b>

<p>At the hotel, I was the controller, so the writings would go from the general manager to myself and the director of sales would address the sales portion of it, and then from there we would present to corporate and that would be the vice-presidents and the board of directors. We put a lot of exact statements in homecare. Now they can make a nursing diagnosis. Over time I was able to make company policy. My work in doing the radio show afforded me, actually some notoriety. We read the brief, We find in favor of you.</p>	<p>Writing to diagnose, Writing financial reviews, Showing employees good writing by example, Practicing law, Settling old cases, Writing to Customers, Writing policies and procedures for the business she owns, Writing with understanding of law</p>	<p><b>Writing with Authority</b></p>
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<i>Table 1-1</i>		
<b>Participant Statements</b>	<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Focused Codes</b>
<p>He (the boss) said I had better get better with my writing because I wrote a lot of letters in business, and reports and projects. Getting through without having a degree has always been kind of like your slip is showing, like you don't have what other people have in your like position. I documented enough that when we were audited by HRS, my documentation stood. So I did go with a very well known law firm where they are really busy and I can actually do cases.</p>	<p><b>Improving writing for Promotions, improving writing in college, Improving writing to improve ethos, Gaining understanding of audience, Consolidating information for busy audience, Learning hidden rules of academic writing, knowing purpose and expectations of writing</b></p>	<p><b>Writing themselves into authority through ethos</b></p>
<p>If it ain't charted, it aint done. Because I keep an accounting of all the checks, The regulations as far as what you could and couldn't say to someone. Everything had to be documented.</p>	<p>Writing patient narratives, Documenting to meet legal standards, Documenting student goals and services, Demanding more documentation, Documenting at home, Labeling children creating more paperwork</p>	<p><b>Writing to document for legal or paper trail purposes</b></p>

<i>Table 1-1</i>		
<b>Participant Statements</b>	<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Focused Codes</b>
I felt like the majority of people that I read I could do as well or better. The younger people being too casual as far as not writing complete sentences because it takes too long. Children today are not even taught cursive writing and it's a shame. Today we see sloppy writing. A lot of these people that are going to college now, I don't know what they are learning.	Writing with poor grammar equals poor ethos, Foregrounding correctness in writing, Criticizing lack of cursive today, Criticizing other's sloppiness in writing as unprofessional	Criticizing the younger generation

These codes, memos and theories led me to my claims that women used the opportunities that second wave feminism opened to them to gain positions of trust and authority in the workplace. These women were able to use their literacies to document and meet increasing requirements for documentation. Some participants were able to surpass documentation through an acute awareness of ethos and audience to achieve upper echelon positions. This study may be reflective of the experiences of women who started their careers during the first half of the 1960s in the midst of the women's liberation movement and the transition to fast capitalism. It is not reflective of all women's experiences due to time and resource constraints. A much larger study

involving a larger, more ethnically and racially diverse group of women may well shed more light on women's literacies during the period of the 1960s to the 1990s and beyond.

## CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN AND THE DOCUMENTARY SOCIETY

During analysis it became apparent that all the participants had spent a significant amount of time writing for documentation purposes. That we have become a documentary society in which our reality and our work is all documented for information, legal or paper trail purposes is well researched by scholars (Brandt, Smith). Knowledge and self-directed learning are valued in the new workplace according to Gee and Lankshear. Keep up or get out seems to be the norm in the workplace (Gee and Lankshear 93). We see evidence of new ways of working and documentation even in factories where paper trails had never been heard of in the past (Belfiore, Folinsbee). As one of the participants, Gabrielle, the nurse claims, “*If it ain’t charted, it ain’t done,*” pointing to the idea that if an action isn’t documented in written form, a person can’t prove they did it at all. Nurses have to make sure they document in chart form or they can be fired because they can’t prove they treated the patient. Barbara, another participant, couldn’t prove she provided special education services for her students if she didn’t document what she did for them. For these participants, documentation has always been proof of work done.

In the case of the participants of this study, documentation was a large part of their working lives. The documentation the women participants did varied within the contexts of their positions, but they were all responsible for documentation. My first claim is that these participants used their literacies to achieve a position of trust and authority in our documentary society. My second claim is that some of the participants saw an increase in documentation over the course of their careers. Our society saw a rise in documentation, making documentation a

viable way for these participants to use their literacies to get and keep positions of trust and authority. Part of keeping those positions of authority however, was being able to keep pace with the increasing levels of documentation as our society demanded more and more documentation as proof of work accomplished. The trends seen in these participants' literacies may speak to larger trends in society at the time, although they aren't universal to all workers during that social historical intersection.

#### Cookie:

Our first participant is Cookie. Cookie is a good example of a participant who used documentation in order to get a position of trust and authority in the workplace. Cookie was educated in Catholic school and then a business school in Chicago. She began her career in the early 1960s. Over the course of her work life, she was divorced, remarried, and widowed, adopted two children and moved to Florida. She started out as a nurse's aide and then a keypunch operator. After that, she processed insurance claims and then became a bookkeeper. She has remained a bookkeeper for an upscale bridal shop for the last 30 years.

She looked at every job as a system, and enjoyed creating organized paper trails. Cookie used writing in the form of documentation, and an affinity for paper trails to work her way into her position as the trusted bookkeeper for the bridal shop. Over time, she realized that if a person learns the system of whatever job he or she needs to do, the routine, the common literacies, then the job became easier. In her interview, she claims that most jobs seemed repetitious to her, so once she learned the routine, her jobs were usually fairly easy.

Her early work as a nurse's aide and keypunch operator involved some documentation, but her thirty-year job as a bookkeeper is all documentation. She explains that after she found a computer glitch at the bridal shop where she still works as a bookkeeper, she no longer trusts computers. She insists today upon keeping paper records of all the shop's business transactions, from each salesperson's sales and commissions to the owner's purchases. To her, it is important that her boss, the owner, knows exactly the amount she's making in sales verses how much money she has going in purchases. Cookie is still in charge of payroll and commissions.

Cookie's work in documenting sales and commissions created a paper trail valuable to her boss, making documentation via record keeping her main job. Cookie recalls that everything she does is writing,

*Well everything that I do for my job I am writing. I mean I can do the dailies what they do (the sales), I have a chart that I put them on. Because when I do get a bank statement I reconcile it. I have to go according to my sheet of the monies that have taken in. I'm always writing something, either paying something, doing the payroll every 2 weeks. Always writing, they fax me over the time cards. It's always writing. I'm always writing. Then I write out the bills because I don't always have to go out to my folders. I have these sheets that I will write out all the companies and their invoices that I am paying the amounts and put the check number on there so. Like if somebody calls me 30, 40 days later I can just go to my one folder and look up the company and tell them it was this check number for this amount this invoice.*

During the interview, Cookie didn't at first think of her job as writing because she does bookkeeping and numbers, but when asked about the paper trail she creates, she realized that her entire job is writing. Her entire job revolves around keeping the paper trail she created accurate and viable for her boss. Over the thirty years she has now worked for her boss the shopkeeper, she has a proven track record of keeping an organized paper trail.

*Because I keep an accounting of all the checks. Everything was paid for by check. They have to let me know exactly what they are writing out of the store or my boss is writing out of the check book. I have to know everything, and I usually do call them (the other store employees) maybe like twice a week to find out what checks they have written out... because I'm down to the penny exactly. I like to know what we have.... I know what's written out. I can tell her (the boss) every day this is what you have, this is where we are at.*

It is her documentary skills, particularly her affinity for paper trails and accuracy in her bookkeeping that has earned her a place of trust at the shop. Because Cookie can keep an accurate paper trail and maintains an ethos of honesty, her boss has kept her as bookkeeper for thirty years. To her boss, Cookie is indispensable. For Cookie, the shop provides her a stable income even in her 70s. She treats the shop as her own and guards against her boss being charged too much for purchases, or the salespeople charging double commissions.

Cookie's story highlights that for her, a secure job, where she was trusted was her goal. She was satisfied with that accomplishment. She never attempted to go beyond that. She

explained in the interview that most of her friends from her working class neighborhood didn't go to college, so the jobs she got were the best she felt she could hope for. Her work as a nurse's aide, keypunch operator and trusted bookkeeper at the bridal shop has provided her with a stable income and supported her and her children even when she was between husbands. She likes the bookkeeping job, and takes pride in her organized paper trail. That she was able to find a job she actually likes, is something positive. When she was married, her paycheck combined with her husband's enabled her family to achieve a middle class status. At the end of the interview, she claimed it took years and a lot of hard work, but she and her husband were proud when they were told by an accountant they were finally middle class.

Gabrielle:

The nurse, Gabrielle, also used documentation to earn herself a place of trust within her field. Gabrielle's story traces how nurses used documentation to put themselves in positions of authority and make medical diagnoses. Gabrielle is one of the participants who noticed an increase in the documentation required in her field. Gabrielle was educated in public schools and then a three-year diploma nursing school where she earned her license as a registered nurse. Like many of the participants, she found herself divorced during her career, and supported herself and her children through a nursing career that spanned 43 years. She remembers that when she first began nursing in the early 1960s, nurses were not allowed to diagnose patients,

*When I first started we could not put down that the patient was green... you had to write appears. We could not make a diagnosis. We were nurses. Only the doctors made diagnoses, so we only put down appears so. You had to put appears, you couldn't put an exact fact because we were observers. So it was all appears. You couldn't make the exact statement.*

That she had to write 'appears' on patient charts shows her writing with a lack of authority at the start of her career. Doctors were the only ones who had the authority to make any exact statements that could be interpreted as diagnoses. Nurses at the time, according to Gabrielle, were women, and mostly white. Doctors were men and mostly white. She claims there were very few female doctors at the time.

Over the course of her career, she documented patient charts and wrote patient narratives. She is adamant that writing was never what she considered to be the primary part of being a nurse and charting was not a part of the job she found enjoyable. Taking care of the patient was foregrounded, but she understood that writing was important in the sense that everything the nurses did for the patients had to be documented, not only for patients' care, and information for the nurses and doctors, but for legal purposes too. She repeatedly said during the interview that, "*If it's not documented, it's not done*", meaning that according to hospital standards, if a nurse didn't document what they had done for patients, they couldn't prove treatments had been done, and therefore didn't have, "*a leg to stand on,*" legally, as Gabrielle put it. Nurses who didn't document could lose their jobs. Gabrielle became good enough at documentation that she was taken seriously by doctors and never faced a malpractice lawsuit. She remembered an incident

when she worked in home health care when a patient became irate because the home care business refused to send the same nurse's aide to her. The patient had been abusive and didn't want any workers of color or red-heads. Because of the abuse, the aid refused to go back. The patient then reported Gabrielle to the oversight authorities because she wanted the aid to come back. Gabrielle documented everything that happened between the patient and the aid so she was not accused of any malpractice. She was told by the oversight organization that she was right not to send the aid back to the patient. Her skill at documenting saved her from being accused of wrongdoing.

Gabrielle's skills as a nurse and documenting patient care also led to her observations being taken seriously by doctors, *"If I said something to a doctor they knew that I wasn't trying to make something up, that what my observations were real. They weren't drama. Patient is whatever and they (the doctors) said ok, ordered according to such."* That her medical observations and decisions were taken seriously by doctors was a source of pride to Gabrielle. They believed her and ordered the treatments she recommended. For a nurse who foregrounded taking care of the patients, the doctors' confidence in her medical observations and decisions was a source of satisfaction.

During the course of her career, she also was able to make some diagnoses on her own when she worked in home health care,

*We had what they called mods. Modification plan, if you like, oh had to put a band aide on their hand, (you had to write) the reason you are doing it and write out an order and send it into the physician so it can be signed and be a part of the chart. Because you are*

*out in the field now. You are not in a hospital. You are working under doctors' orders but you are also doing some independent diagnosing. Like you got to have a patient there that has a bleeding hand then you would take care of it. You don't call the physician because number one, he won't get back to you till a day or so depending on the urgent need. And you are not going to talk to a physician, trust me.*

Her ability to write exact statements during her years of home care show her in a position of authority. She maintains that nurses are now allowed to make nursing diagnoses of their own in hospitals as well as home care, *"It's changed a lot since then. Now nurses are allowed to document that the patient is green. Now from what I understand, I worked homecare, we put down a lot of exact statements in homecare. They can put down exact statements in the hospital now too."*

To Gabrielle, the ability to write exact statements and diagnose a patient was a huge step in authority for nurses. She put it as *"getting out from under the thumb"*. Her ability to document and write diagnoses was intertwined with her medical authority over the course of her 43-year career as a registered nurse. She felt it was important to nurses to be able to write their own diagnoses,

*Well as far as nursing is concerned, the nurses are doing more firsthand evaluations. They don't have to put appears anymore. There are women out there now that are going to fields were that were primarily a male dominated field. Like a doctor. There were very*

*few woman doctors when I was in nurses' training... Yes. It's kind of like domination.*

*They (the nurses) are going out from underneath the thumb. They are becoming much more independent, in charge, not subservient. That's the biggest change I have seen and I say more power to them.*

She used documentation as a pathway to authority, and attests to nurses in general having more authority now than in the past. The nurses' authority and power lies in their ability to write exact statements which can be interpreted as diagnoses. These diagnoses show nurses' medical knowledge, establish the nurses' credibility, show the work they do for patients and provide nurses with a means of defending their medical choices. The charting literacies therefore create a means for nurses to have authority and power.

During the course of her career, Gabrielle not only used documentation to write her way to authority, but also saw an increase in the documentation required of nurses. She traces the different ways of charting over the course of her career,

*Well of course I had to write in the patients' charts their activities, what kind of care we gave them, medications, and it went from different kinds of charting. When I first graduated, it was just a note to say essentially the patient was still breathing, ate well, up in chair, that sort of thing. Then they got into more charting and charting meds, their vital signs and all that kind of good stuff. Then we got into what they called soap charting which was assessments, observation, performance I think. I don't remember what the S was. After that, of course, we had to give them a narrative document of the patient and*

*what they were doing and it was really hard on your wrist because it was hard, a lot of charting especially if you were working nights and had 50 charts to do. Usually there were maybe two RNs on a night shift.*

Later in the interview, she added,

*Yeah, we do more documentation on the patient (now) like, what they are like, what the treatments are, explain it in more detail, what the medications are, their reactions to their meds good or bad or indifferent, how they feel about it, say if they show frank depression cause they had cancer surgery and are depressed cause they had cancer. That sort of thing. This we talk about (now). We didn't use to.*

Her description of documentation clearly shows the changes from nurses writing very simple notes to writing the SOAP charting which required more information to paragraph narratives about patients, including medication and mental health issues. She adds that, “*It was hard on the wrist*” to explain that all the required charting was hard work. Each change to the charting expectations brought about more writing. She recalled during the interview that one night, she got home late when she and her husband were expecting company. He was angry with her, but there was nothing she could do. The hospital had been busy that day with numerous patient medical incidents, and they all had to be documented before Gabrielle could go home. This increasing documentation was not a choice and Gabrielle was willing to do it in order to keep her job and know that she was secure in her medical decisions. Gabrielle never foregrounded writing. Patient care was always her primary concern, but she also understood that legally,

writing was the only way for nurses to defend their medical choices and have any kind of authority.

The data suggests that for Gabrielle, the increased documentation and the ability to write patient narratives is intertwined with the eventual ability of nurses to write exact statements, or diagnoses. The increased documentation provided nurses like Gabrielle with a means of defending their medical choices and patient care, and was intertwined with later being able to write exact statements and diagnoses later in her career.

Barbara:

Like Cookie and Gabrielle, Barbara, the fabric and wallpaper designer who became a special education teacher, was one of the participants who spent a lot of time documenting. She too saw an increase in the documentation required of special education teacher.

Barbara started her education in Catholic elementary school, but then went to public schools until high school graduation. She then went to a fashion institute. After graduating from the fashion institute, she worked as a fabric designer and wall paper designer in New York before she had her children. She took some years off to raise her children and then went back to school to get her degree in special education. She then worked as a special education teacher for 14 years. She recalls having to prepare individual lessons for 12 students for all subjects. The students had different disabilities so they also had different learning goals and education requirements. All their learning goals and lessons had to be documented by law.

Barbara was dedicated to her students. Although her main concern was teaching the students, the documentation was a requirement for the job and part of being a trusted teacher within the school district. Barbara maintains the documentation that her state required for special education students increased over the course of the 14 years she taught. She claims that,

*Teachers are overloaded with paperwork and more so when I retired than when I first started because more people became aware, more children were diagnosed later on than earlier. Because when I first started they were considered badly behaved, disruptive, when in essence, they had a handicap. That started after Kennedy did the disabilities act, everything had to be documented. All these children needed certain things on their IEP.*

According to Barbara, students who were disabled had been treated as simply badly behaved in the past. Once Kennedy instituted the disabilities act, disabilities were not only recognized, but accommodated within the schools. The documentation required of teachers was a way to prove students had received accommodations, and track if those accommodations were helpful.

She testifies that she saw an increase in the amount of paperwork required of special education teachers within the 14 years she spent as a teacher. She believes that new laws recognizing disabilities were at the forefront of increased documentation. As disabilities were recognized, more was done to help students who were affected, which in turn led to more documentation as proof of services provided. She remembers that she was given very little time during school, only one forty-five minute period to write lesson plans and individual education plans. When she got home, she still had to cook dinner and take care of her own children, so

consequently, it was normal for her to stay up until midnight or one o'clock in the morning to finish her paperwork after her children had gone to bed. She believes that computers have been a driving force behind increased work expectations in our society,

*I would imagine because computers have eliminated a lot of the scrub work that people now have more work thrown on them. Because they no longer have to spend all the hours doing scrub work. So if your job is one thing, and 25 years ago, it would have taken all week to do one thing, now you can do that on your computer or iPad in 2 hours, so if I'm an employer, I can give you more responsibility because you have more time. So when they simplified (with computers), they opened the doors for employers to give their workers more to do.*

Barbara's observation about computers easing the way for the employers to require more work of employees is not unfounded. DeVoss argues that since computers have been introduced into the workplace, work from upper levels has trickled down to pink-collar workers without increase in pay or prestige (355). Although Barbara's efforts to document student lessons and their education goals within individualized lesson plans did not lead to other positions, her skills at documenting for her students helped her keep her position as trusted special education teacher for 14 years. During the time of her employment, she had to navigate more and more documentation in order to keep her job as a trusted teacher. Teaching students was foregrounded for Barbara. Documentation was not. She understood, however, that documentation, at least to some extent, helped the students and was a means of keeping her job.

Cookie the bookkeeper, Barbara the special education teacher, and Gabrielle the nurse, all were able to get and keep positions of trust and authority during their careers. Their ability to document played a significant role in their working lives and their authority in the workplace. In Gabrielle and Barbara's stories, they both testify to increasing levels of documentation required of workers in their fields. Their literacies, particularly their ability to document, played a crucial part in their working lives. It might be argued that without being able to meet the increasing requirements of documentation, they would not have been able to remain employed. Gabrielle said as much when she remembered not being able to go home at the end of a shift until her charts were done, at least not if she wanted to keep her job.

So how did these participants learn to document? They all note communities of practice (Wenger 6). To put it simply, workers like these participants learned the documentation that was so important to their jobs from coworkers, and in turn, sometimes helped other workers. Barbara learned how to write lesson plans and individual education plans with other special education teachers. Barbara recalls, "*They showed me how to be concise rather than to go on and on and on. Cause I can go on. And I had to learn that's not what we need.*" Gabrielle remembers, "*Well, we were taught charting in school. As I said, we had inservices from the hospital on how they wanted their charting done. We learned from our peers and sometimes, you went with your gut instinct. At least I did.*" Cookie remembers learning from other workers, and teaching them in turn, "*When you go into any corporation, any job, anywhere, they will show you what the job is, what they want you to learn*". In short, they didn't learn all the literacies they needed for the workplace in school, but rather over time through a mix of school, coworkers and experience.

These participants learned the literacies that helped them document in a variety of ways. They then used that documentation to secure various positions of trust and authority in their workplaces. The documentation increased over time for both Barbara and Gabrielle. They might not have seen documentation as the most important part of their job, but they understood that their positions required it. Their ability to continue to document, and meet increasing requirements for that documentation, kept these women in the positions they needed to in order to support themselves and their families. They had to continue to learn and relearn how to write the documentation required of them in order to survive and thrive. In Gabrielle's case, her ability to document patient care, and meet the standards of increased documentation played a key role in her being able to write exact statements and nursing diagnoses. Her story illustrates that as she went from minimal charting to SOAP charting to writing patient narratives and finally exact statements about patients, using increased literacies. She had to be able to write paragraphs about patients, their care, and what she had done as treatment. With that increased writing came more authority to write exact statements and more medical authority to diagnose patients. She, like the other participants, found that even though they didn't view writing as the most important part of their job, they had to write well. They had to write to document in the ways required of them in order to get and keep jobs. Then they had to keep up with more and more writing required of them to continue to be secure in their positions. These participants had different jobs, and the literacies and documentation needed for those jobs worked in different ways, but it was important to all of them to learn the literacies and documentation that was particular to their occupation in order to thrive in a documentary society.

### **CHAPTER THREE: TRANSCENDING DOCUMENTATION AND BREAKING BOUNDARIES**

Like Cookie, Barbara and Gabrielle, the next set of participants had to document as well. Ms. B, Rosemary, Olivia, and Patricia, however, did not document as much as the other participants. The data suggests, and my claim here, is that these women were the boundary breakers. These women used an acute sense of audience and ethos to surpass documentation, and gain authority to write their own documents in various professions. These women's achievements transcended what had been done by previous generations of women, and an acute awareness of ethos and audience had a large part in their writing lives and achievements. In short, these women entered professions previously dominated by men such as executive roles in insurance and hotel management, as well as law practice. They refused to allow gender boundaries to stop them from pursuing what they wanted and earning the money they desired. These women were not satisfied with being secretaries. They wanted their chance at being the boss, and showing their intellect. Their literacies were intertwined with their success as they forged their way in occupations dominated by men. The work they did entailed using different literacies, but a common theme was that their acute awareness of audience and ethos played a crucial part in these women breaking boundaries and transcending documentation.

Ms. B:

Ms. B's ability to teach writing propelled her to having a voice on Newark's Mayoral Task Force for Urban Education. Ms. B explains her own journey from a traditional gendered role as a wife to teaching in the classroom at the elementary, middle and high school levels, and later having a voice in the Mayor's Task Force on Urban Education. Ms. B is the one African America participant within the study. Like many of the other participants, she too found herself divorced with a child to support. She was educated within the Newark school district and later went on to achieve two master's degrees, one in reading and another in curriculum. She also has earned credits toward a doctorate. She retired from her teaching career and left her doctoral studies to help care for her two grandchildren in Florida recently. Her career started in 1961 and she explains that she started out teaching the elementary students, then moved to middle school. She felt she outgrew the middle school students, so she then moved to high school where she knew she had a bigger challenge in the older kids. She remembered that teaching in an inner city school was hard work.

In the course of her career she became an instructor at New York University, "*And a lot of the teachers who were in NYU were really interested in what I had learned and how I was able to accomplish it*". As a retired teacher, she had a voice on a Mayoral Task Force on Urban Education,

*This happened two years ago. Myself and some other retired teachers, the board called us in and asked our opinion about how can we keep children in school so they can graduate and move on with their lives. Because in an urban school, or a ghetto school,*

*there is a large dropout rate. Especially with the males. They said that the children in China, which is true, children in China, in the Scandinavian countries they just blow the SAT out of the water when they come to America and take it. So they wanted to find out what could we do to help our children become better test takers and become more interested in learning. How can we take the street learning that they have and blend it with classroom learning?*

Ms. B's skill in teaching students to write was at the forefront of her growing authority throughout her career. Documenting was a secondary task for her. Indeed, she transcended documenting to have a voice of authority on the Mayor's Task Force for Urban education. Her achievements transcend those of most women, and most teachers of her time. It is the experience of most teachers that their voices are seldom if ever heard by politicians. That Ms. B was chosen to speak on the Mayoral Task Force is a striking mark of her authority as an educator.

Throughout Ms. B's career, she shows an acute understanding of ethos. She attributes her success to being able to address students on their level, to "*get into their heads*". She explains, "*An education researcher came into our school. He said we have to get into their (the students') world, not have them come into our world if we want them to be successful. We need to know the shows they look at on TV and the music they listen to, the dances they do... We have to know their world.*" She took the advice and made a point of understanding the neighborhoods where the students came from and their lives in general. She also understood that in order to teach her population of students, she had to present herself as leader.

*I taught in the same neighborhood where I was raised and where I went to school and I knew everybody in the neighborhood. So the neighborhood changed so much. It was different when I began teaching so I couldn't bring it into to the classroom (the way I had learned). The kids would look at me like is she stupid. I'm not doing that work. So I had to be the leader and I had to let the kids know there is only one leader, one gang leader and you are looking at her, me, little ole me. I'm the leader. You walk through my thresh hold, I'm the leader. Everybody does what I say.*

It was Ms. B's ability to understand her urban students and be a leader to them that was paramount to her success in teaching them to read and write. That success in the classroom then led to her authority to instruct new teachers at NYU and a place on Newark's Mayoral Task Force on Urban Education. Her awareness of ethos led her to transcend documentation and achieve what only a few teachers had in her position on the task force.

Olivia:

Olivia, the youngest participant at 67 years old, pushed gender boundaries. She used her acute awareness of audience and ethos to gain executive positions in the hotel industry. She began her career at the early age of 16 in 1966. She rose from bookkeeper to regional comptroller for a well-respected national hotel chain during a time when accounting was a male dominated field. Like many of the other participants, Olivia divorced and remarried at a young age. She went to public school, and when she married and got pregnant, finished her GED. She

first went to work as file clerk and then at an early credit card corporation in Baltimore. She recalls that she and her husband moved close to his family in West Virginia. There she turned to accounting and became an accounting manager, moved to Tennessee and then Florida. Over the course of her career, she took coursework at three different universities. She recalls that, “*Well. When I first started, I tried to do the least possible (writing) cause I was aware that it wasn’t my, the best thing I did. I was much better at accounting than I was at writing,*” showing an awareness that her writing skills were weak.

She recalls a pivotal moment when she realized that writing well was important if she was going to be successful as an accounting manager. Despite her perception of lacking basic English skills, she shows a keen awareness of audience. She recalls a time when she went out to lunch with a group of colleagues hoping to move to their department. When she used the words, “lawyer school”, they laughed at her. She realized that her “Baltimore slang” wasn’t helping her connect to those colleagues. Instead it was causing her to have a negative ethos with prospective coworkers,

*And like I said, they were all laughing at me and right then and there I said I’m going to college, I’m going to get an education so people don’t laugh at me because I want them to take me seriously. I’m a smart person and I don’t want people thinking I am dumb. And you know your English can affect the way someone thinks about you especially in business. And when you write, even if you can speak, but if you can’t write, it has a big effect.*

Olivia understood that her writing affected how people perceived her. She also understood that in order to be successful in business, she had to have an ethos of intelligence and competence. It was clear to her that her colleagues in the business world wouldn't take her seriously if she didn't use language in the same way they did. Although her job was accounting, and she loved numbers, she couldn't escape writing if she wanted to move into higher management positions.

As she was promoted further and needed to write more, she began coursework at the university and finally a business writing course,

*Then by taking your GED, I got through it, but I still lacked a bit of foundation you know. Why did you put a comma there because I hesitated. Why do you capitalize, because it is important? So yeah, but in business it really started to show you know. Getting through without a degree has always kind of been you know like your slip is showing, like you don't have what other people in your same position have to be on top.*

The analogy of her slip showing shows that she felt self-conscious since she didn't have the writing skills and the education that others who were in her position had. She felt she had to keep up with others in her field and not let her lack of education show. Her understanding of ethos and drive to improve led her to take the business writing course. She claimed to like the business writing course and found it helpful.

Olivia continued on her career long quest to improve her English, as she puts it. She rose through the ranks to become regional comptroller for a well-respected national hotel chain. She explains that she bought books that helped her write employee reviews for her employees

because she realized that the reviews were important to them. She collected phrases from reports that she liked and kept them in a notebook as well. Her quest to improve her writing seemed to be intertwined with her rise in the corporate world. She explains that,

*O; At a hotel I was the comptroller. So I was the top person in finance and the writings would go from the general manager to myself and the director of sales would address the sales portion of it and then from there we would present to corporate and that would be vice presidents of the company and everything and if it was a public company it would go to the board of directors. Also when you have an annual audit when you have a CPA that comes in and they would audit your books and they would come out with their comments and you would have to write responses to their comments. So that's more writing.*

Her awareness of how her writing was perceived by others such as the board of directors seems intertwined with her success. She was well aware that people such as the board of directors might never meet her face to face. They might only ever know her through her reports, therefore, her writing in the reports had to be perceived as competent and intelligent.

She became comfortable with writing with time and experience. Olivia moved past documentation to writing financial reports and employee evaluations during the course of her career in a male dominated field. She not only used documentation, she transcended it as she was promoted. She then had the authority to write more original documents that had further impact. Although semi-retired now at 67 years old, she still closes books for some hotels and acts as interim comptroller when she is needed. She is often asked for letters of recommendation from

former employees as well, letters which she feels are important, and takes great pride in writing. Her story illustrates how as she rose in management and gained authority, she wrote documents that were more and more important to those around her, such as the board of directors and the employees who worked under her.

Olivia's story also illustrates the paradox of how closely writing is tied to success in the workplace and yet how school is not necessarily primary to that success. It is interesting that although Olivia took coursework at three universities, in accounting and English, in order to improve her communication skills, she never completed the requirements for her degree. She had been promoted to the top of her field, and the degree became irrelevant. She did still continue to learn communication skills on her own that helped her in the workplace. Although Olivia never foregrounded writing and didn't even like to write, she pursued improving her writing because she knew how important it was for anyone, especially a woman in a man's world, to have good communication skills.

She has noticed the change in women's positions and their writing in the business workplace as her own career advanced over time. Her observations are that there are more women now in her field, and it's now okay to write in a more feminine style. I believe what she means by that is a more personal style,

*I would think that when I first started out in that there were mostly men in business and especially in accounting. When I started work for that fortune 500 company and I became an accounting manager I was one of two in a fortune 500 company. There were only 2 female account managers in this company. So when you are writing and looked at what*

*they (the men) are writing you tend it to write like them. And you didn't really put much personality into it. So we even wore business suits, the old pant suit and more masculine. Where over the years especially when I got into hospitality then it was acceptable to not have to wear blue and grey suits all the time. And to be more like a woman. And my writing was more acceptable to where I could get a little more creative... I didn't have to be so strict staunch business all the time.*

She says too that more women are now accountants and comptrollers. It seems that as more and more women have entered such positions, writing is now allowed to be more personal, more feminine, something Olivia didn't dare to do when she first began her career. As she wrote more and more and gained experience, she was able to become more comfortable and put her own personality in her business writing.

Rosemary:

Like Olivia, Rosemary also used an acute awareness of audience and ethos to surpass documentation and achieve an upper echelon position in a male dominated profession. Rosemary married at 17, and went to work on Wall Street in New York City in 1962. She was educated in Catholic schools in New York City. When she was thrown out of the all-girls Catholic high school she attended for getting married, she finished her high school education at night school. She is the only participant who is married, but never divorced. She had daughters and was

adamant that they attend college. During her career, she went back to school to earn the highest insurance industry designation available, Chartered Property and Casualty Underwriter. After a long career in insurance, she retired as Vice-President of the largest insurance agency in Pennsylvania and now owns her own senior home care business with her daughter.

Rosemary too has seen many changes in the business world. She recalls not being allowed to write on her own at the beginning of her career because she was a woman, and women were only allowed to be secretaries,

*I think that when I started working and you could never write a letter on your own, that was annoying because you were writing a letter in essence, but someone else's name was going on it. Your little initials were just going on the inside that you typed it. I think there were times in my earlier career that I resented that. I resented the fact that I could not put my name on a letter. It always had to be the bosses name on the letter.*

Rosemary was not content to be a background employee, writing for the boss without any authority to even sign her name. Her evolution into authority started with her earning her insurance license because then she was able to write letters and sign her own name. Interestingly enough, her boss initially didn't want her to get her license because she was a Catholic woman from New York City in a Protestant small town area,

*The biggest thing is when I first started out, you were never in a position where you were asked to write a letter or sign a letter. Even if you were asked to (write a letter) because*

*you had done so several times before, you were not allowed to put your signature on the end of it. The person you worked for, their signature was on the end of it. And even when I very first started in the insurance business before I had my insurance license, if I sent out a letter, it had to have the owner of the business' name on it. Not mine. I could not sign my signature. I think the big change was when I got my insurance licenses and I was able to sign my name on papers myself. Not only could I compose them, but I could sign them and I guess that would be the big change.*

Rosemary, without articulating it, seemed to realize that power lies in language. Power in the business world lies in the signature. It is the boss who signs the letters. She was determined to sign her own letters and convinced her then boss that she should get her insurance license. Her license, and the ability to compose her own letters gave rise to her running the agency's first branch office. In time, she became the vice-president in charge of all branch offices throughout the state as the agency expanded.

Rosemary, like all other participants, did have to document. Her writing, however, evolved from writing letters to clients to writing company policy and doing a weekly radio show for the local radio station in which she answered questions about insurance,

*I think I used to enjoy when I first did the policies and procedures for the Agency. I did them for my own office.... I can't even remember what even gave me the idea to do the policies and procedures, but I knew that as new people came in that we were going to have to have something in writing to teach people how to learn the job and how to learn*

*what their job was to begin with, what their true duties were because that had never been in writing. So, as my own personal office at the time grew, I developed this handbook for the new girls coming in. And ABC Insurance Company came in to do an audit, to take a look at all of our offices, to see what we were doing right and what we were doing wrong so they could show us as a company how to go forward. When they came into my office, they said to me, do you have any policies and procedures and I said yes. And I handed them my policies and procedures book. I didn't know this at the time, but nobody in any of our offices including the home office had a policies and procedures book.*

For Rosemary, having the authority to write company policy was smart business and a personal triumph. Her writing in the form of policies and procedures got her noticed by the larger insurance company. The men who ran the home office were questioned as far as why they had not written a policy and procedures manual. As a woman who had been told that insurance was for men, she saw recognition of her writing as a score for her and for women in business.

Rosemary broke more boundaries with the radio show she produced for the local radio station,

*Another big thing for me personally was when I was asked to do the insurance counselor show on the radio and I wrote all my own scripts. So I would see what kind of questions people had and I would go on the radio and record it for it to be played so the people in our area could get their insurance questions answered. And I really enjoyed doing that. That not only could I write the script, but I had the knowledge to answer the questions*

*and be out there to do that. And some of the people who really laughed at me when I started in the insurance industry and thought it was really funny that I was a woman insurance agent, because they didn't have women insurance agents. Some of those people were very jealous in the end that I got to do the the radio show and they didn't.*

Rosemary took pride in being able to showcase her insurance knowledge on the radio show. She was especially proud of being able to write her own radio scripts. Again, as a woman who was told that insurance was for men, she saw this as another personal score, and a score for women.

Rosemary, like Olivia, never foregrounded writing. Unlike Olivia, she liked writing. She did mention in a follow up interview that the added responsibility of having a career sometimes weighed on her. She felt personally responsible for insuring the people of her town in case of crisis and did not want to make mistakes. Even though she felt the weight of extra responsibility, she too still had to go home and take care of her family and cook dinner after work. She once said that nothing changed for the men when women went back to work. They did the same things they had always done. The women who worked had to figure out how to work, and still do all the household duties and take care of the children.

Rosemary now writes as co-owner of a business with her daughter and takes satisfaction from writing the policies and procedures for her own company as well as articles for the employees to help them care for their elderly clients. She is also the participant who helped other women to positions of authority,

*The biggest thing I've seen over time is that women now can write letters on their own. They don't have to sign the boss's signature. The women I had in my office, because I knew how I had felt, I encouraged them to write letters and sign their own names to them. They could write letters and correspond directly with our clients. They didn't have to write my name. There was no ego thing there so I think it helped them develop their writing and develop the fact that they were women and they were worth something and they could actually write letters on their own. I think that's the biggest thing. That big changeover, from always making somebody else look good and not having the opportunity to be your own person. That was a big thing.*

It was important to Rosemary that she pass on her literacies and knowledge to other women, whether they were workers who worked under her as Vice-President or her daughters. She wanted to see other women have economic autonomy, and be successful. To Rosemary, literacy was key in being successful in business, and was a non-negotiable, necessary skill for herself and other women.

Rosemary's story illustrates her journey from not having the authority to sign her own name to a document to having the authority to write her own documents to finally being able to create company policy and promote authority in her female employees. Her authority, and success in the workplace is intertwined with her ability to write. Like Olivia, her writing transcended documentation during the course of her career. She progressed from daily documentation activities to writing company policy. She too, like Olivia, found her writing skills to be intertwined with her success. A college degree, however, was not a necessity in her rise to

authority. For Rosemary, like Olivia, a college degree became irrelevant once she had been promoted within her profession. The industry certification became more useful.

It is interesting to note that although Rosemary never went to college, she attended a Catholic all-girls school run by an order of nuns, the Daughters of Divine Charity, who she feels gave her a world class education. She maintains that the nuns offered business courses and drummed accurate writing and numeracy into their female students. She still feels that the education she received from the nuns was helpful in her career.

Like Olivia, Rosemary also demonstrates an acute awareness of ethos and audience, something she claims the nuns taught her. She talks about professionalism and writing as an important medium to create a good ethos with clients,

*I think that being able to write well is important because it determines your professionalism. It gives people a secure feeling in dealing with you. I know when I look at a letter that has been written to me, and it's not punctuated correctly and has misspelled words, I'm going to look at this letter and think, is this someone I really want to do business with? If they don't care how well they write a letter, or they're not educated enough to write a letter, should they really be in the position they're in? Being able to write a good business letter helps you because the person receiving that letter is going to have a higher opinion of you and respect you more because it is correct and it is done right.*

It is this acute awareness of audience and ethos that is intertwined with her ability transcend documentation and write with authority in a male dominated field, much like Olivia.

It is Olivia and Rosemary who complicate the notion that education in the form of a degree is always needed to succeed. Neither of these women who broke boundaries had college degrees, but took advantage of the literacies offered in school and self directed learning opportunities. Olivia's pursuit of improving her "English" and Rosemary's pursuit of the Chartered Casualty and Property designation show they both pursued literacies that they found helpful in the workplace. They also complicate the notions of women's desire to work. They wanted to work, and were not satisfied with secretarial work, but they would not have called themselves feminists and were not necessarily out to prove women's causes. They simply took the opportunities they saw before them and used their literacies to succeed and go where women had not gone before in the workplace.

Patricia:

Like Olivia and Rosemary, Patricia, the lawyer, used her awareness of audience and ethos to surpass documentation and succeed in a male dominated career. Patricia is the one participant who never married or had children. She is also the most educated of all the participants. She, like many of the participants, went to Catholic schools and then nursing school in New York. She turned down a scholarship to medical school because she did not have a college degree like most medical school students. Instead, she went back to school to get her degree while working as a nurse, fell in love with literature and taught high school. She continued her education and studied literature at the doctoral level. She had completed course work and was ready to write her dissertation when she had to leave school to help her sister and nieces and nephews. Later, she went to law school and had a long career as a lawyer. She recently retired when she moved to Florida.

Patricia worked for publishing company at one point in her career, editing medical texts. She refused to work for one publishing company except as a free-lance editor because of the treatment of the women who worked in the company offices. She insisted on working free-lance for the company when she saw that the workers, who were mostly women, had to call the manager to ask permission to go to the bathroom. She argued that the women who worked there were smart women who were writing and editing textbooks, but were treated like children.

After Patricia went to law school, she learned that the position of female lawyers was precarious, and she felt she needed to be careful in which law firm she chose. She recalls,

*P: And I didn't want to be in a very big law firm because I know what could happen to a woman especially in those kinds of law firms. At least then.*

*M: what would happen to women?*

*P: They would get fired in a couple of years usually. Because they were never given a responsibility. For the most part the people that would go to the job fairs, the people that interviewed them (the female lawyers) were young associates at the larger law firms. The young associates were looking for play girls. They interviewed me once. They interviewed me and said, we work hard but we play hard. Are you ready to play hard? I said what do you mean? He said you know what we mean. I said no I don't. He said you know what we mean, we have a very happy social life. I said I don't think I am your type. That's when I decided I am going to a small law firm where they are really busy and I can actually do cases. So I did go with a very well-known law firm that was basically plaintiff oriented to the cases. So I worked there for 10 years or so. Then I decided to go into practice for myself.*

Her desire to do her own casework and be taken seriously, led her to choose carefully which law firm she chose to work for. She did not want to be treated as a playgirl. She wanted to use her intelligence and knowledge to do something worthwhile and interesting. Her careful choice in law firms allowed her to do case work that eventually led to her ability to go into practice herself. She was the one who wrote the brief for a big case in which her firm filed a complaint against a judge. That particular judge always awarded social security disability to

anyone who sued. Her male boss insisted that he get to try the case against the judge in superior court even though Patricia and her team wrote the brief. Pat recalls,

*I wrote the brief. The court comes out, there were I think three members of the court to hear the case at the superior court. So we are all there. The entire office was there. And our boss is there ready to do battle but we know he is not going to do battle because we already know he can't remember the facts or did not want to remember the facts. This is all pretty confidential, but basically he did not have to do anything because the superior court started the conversation and said we read the brief and we find in favor of you. So you won the case. We are all sitting there together like he is going to mess it up, he is going to mess it up. The judge comes out and says we read the brief, and we won! We are like, yes!*

It is interesting to note here that Patricia had by this point in her career earned the authority to write the brief. Her awareness of ethos and audience had been useful in her workplace writing and legal practice, but her male boss still attempted to try the case himself. It was satisfying to Patricia that her brief was so well written that the case was won based on her skills alone, before the boss could try it, and a testament to her workplace writing skills.

Patricia shows a keen awareness of audience, purpose and the particularities of her writing situation,

*Knowing what the general expectation of what was in front of me, allowed me to find out how to present it. I don't know if that makes sense. When I wrote anything, I knew what my purpose was and what I was looking for, so that's what I pursued. When you're doing academic work you tend to collect a lot of bibliography. When you're doing academic work, you have to make sure it's supported, researched. Academic work is quite different than creative work.*

Here she shows a keen understanding of the rhetorical situation that was an asset to her practice as a lawyer.

Ethos was particularly important to her as a person and in her law practice. In her interview, she talks about joining another lawyer to rent office space. When he did not do legal work that met her standards, she dissolved the agreement and moved out of the space in order to protect her reputation as a lawyer. The other lawyer's poorly written briefs were at the heart of the disagreement.

*He wasn't meeting with them (the clients). I kept saying where are you with these documents? He'd tell me, oh I'm working on them. I said they (the clients) are going to die before they have something they care about written on paper. He told me, oh no no I will get it done. So finally I said you are going to have to call the clients because we are not ready to see them yet. Oh they are coming in. I already made the appointment he said. I said I haven't read your work. He said it's all done. I told him just your name on it not mine because I haven't seen it. If they choose to do business with you that's a*

*different story. I was a little ticked off. I finally said give me the documents. Let me see the documents so I can review them. He gave it to me about 5 minutes before the client was coming in. It's like he copied them from somebody else's work like out of a book. I said you know you can't do that. This is all stuff that is already done. I said there is nothing personal about this. I said you talk to the clients. You never came to me in time. I will not sign it. I want no part of it. He charged him (the client) so much (money). I was talking to one of my friends and was like I want out of there. She said let's move you out of there. It cost a bloody fortune to move out of there. So we moved out. I went back to private practice.*

In this quote, Patricia shows just how important ethos is to her. She moved out of the office space she shared with the other lawyer rather than be associated with him because of his poorly written legal documents and his mistreatment of clients.

Patricia's career spans from nursing to writing and editing textbooks to her own legal practice. Like Olivia and Rosemary, her ability to write was intertwined with her success in the workplace. Her sense of ethos too is closely tied with her success, particularly during her career as a lawyer. Unlike Olivia and Rosemary, her education is also intertwined with her career. Today, she is an avid supporter of Hilary Clinton. Patricia sees her as a fellow female lawyer, and an example of how far women have come in the legal and political professions. She feels women have made great strides in the professions and producing far more serious writing than in the past

It is interesting that Ms. B, the reading and writing teacher, Patricia, the lawyer, Rosemary, the insurance executive, and Olivia, the hotel comptroller exhibit the most audience awareness of all seven of the participants. These participants seem keenly aware of how their clients or students perceive them. In the work they do, good ethos is good practice. A poor ethos won't inspire confidence among potential clients, and therefore won't create more business for those in business such as Rosemary and Olivia. A poor ethos would have constructed Patricia as a shady lawyer. A poor ethos for Ms. B would have caused classroom management problems in the classroom in terms of rebellious students. Even though these women did very different work which involved very different literacies, they all understood the importance of audience and ethos within their workplace positions. For these women, a positive ethos is an essential part of working with others to get the job done.

To these women, a positive ethos is tied to their communication skills. They all understood that people's perceptions of them were tied to their writing. Good communication skills to them are a standard value. The data suggests that these women used their writing skills, and their awareness of ethos to write themselves into authority and transcend the documentation they did at the start of the careers. They went from doing daily documenting chores to being able to have a voice on a mayoral task force, and write documents such as financial reports for the board of directors, company policy, employee reviews and legal briefs.

To these participants, to communicate poorly is to look uneducated and unintelligent, and therefore unworthy of being in a position of authority. Olivia put it succinctly, "*But as I said, you know I felt like the majority of people that I read I could do as well or better. Because even in today's world...people don't even spell check. It's like come on. How are you going to turn in*

*a report to the top people of the corporation and not even spell check?”* She has a keen awareness that sometimes the board of directors might only know an employee based on what they write. Rosemary seems to agree,

*I think that being able to write well is important because it determines your professionalism and it lets people know or it gives people a secure feeling in dealing with you. I know when I look at a letter that has been written to me, and it's not punctuated correctly and has misspelled words, I'm going to look at this letter and think, is this someone I really want to do business with because, if they don't care how well they write a letter, or they're not educated enough to write a letter, should they really be in the position they're in? Being able to write a good business letter helps you because the person receiving that letter is going to have a higher opinion of you and respect you more because it is correct and it is done right.*

It must be remembered as we look at these participants' stories that these participants' working lives and writing lives are intertwined with their acute awareness of ethos and audience. We must also understand their working lives are also complicated by notions of education. It is an interesting paradox that their education was not necessarily tied to their income. Rosemary and Olivia, the executives, achieved upper echelon positions and made more money than most of the other participants even though they did not have degrees. Rosemary did however, have the advantage of a private school education which only serves to underscore how complicated the participants' literacies are.

Their stories must also be understood within the social and historical context in which they happened. When the participants started their careers in the early 1960s, it was at the beginning of the women's movement and the vast change in the economy from traditional capitalism to fast capitalism. Not all careers required degrees at that point. During that time period, workers often were able to climb the ladder if they showed ability, intelligence and were willing to work hard, especially if they were male. Society at that time, however, did not always accept women who wanted to have careers. Rosemary remembers being laughed at because nobody in her community had ever heard of a woman insurance agent. Patricia recalls female lawyers being treated as playgirls. Olivia's memories are of being one of two women she knew of in accounting. Gabrielle remembers nurses being mostly white and all female while doctors were mostly male.

The data from the participant interviews suggests that the participants' ability to read, write and speak was indeed part of the larger material system these participants lived within, and was intertwined with their success in professions still dominated by men. It wasn't, however, the only factor. When I asked Rosemary if her ability to write was what raised her to the position of vice-president, she laughed, "*That was guts. I don't think that being able to write was harmful. Whether it was the main reason I was able to succeed... I think the main reason I was able to succeed was that I was in the right place at the right time and I had the guts to not let people tell me I can't.*"

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to note that we can't separate the participants' writing from the social and historical times in which they began their careers. As many scholars have already noted, in order to understand people's literacies, we must understand the society and historical times in which they lived (Street, Heath, Brandt, Graff). These participants began their careers in the 1960s during a time when the economy was changing from traditional capitalism to fast capitalism. There were still opportunities for those without degrees, but they knew their children would need to go to college to have the same opportunities. Feminism occurred in tandem with the changes in the economy. Second Wave Feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement created opportunities for women that had not been previously available within business, law and medicine. Women went back to school, and back to work in order to take advantage of new opportunities.

Women's desire to work was complicated. Most women felt like they had to work to support their families. Secretarial work and traditional women's work, however, was no longer enough for some women. Women may have needed to work, but they also wanted to work. Women like Patricia, Rosemary and Olivia saw opportunities that hadn't been present in the past. They took these opportunities at the juncture of feminism and fast capitalism and ran with them. Often, they did face obstacles in the sense that society wasn't used to female accountants, insurance executives and lawyers. They may have felt they had to work, but also wanted to work and took pride in that work despite any difficulties they faced, such as sexism, and having to take care of families outside of the workplace.

Women like Cookie, Barbara and Gabrielle, used documentation to secure positions of trust and authority in a fast capitalist world which both Smith and Brandt argue is also a documentary society. Smith claims that, "Our knowledge of contemporary society is to a large extent mediated to us by documents of various kinds," (1). She goes on to say that our reality is that of socially constructed ways of reporting and recording create a reality in documentary form. Brandt agrees and puts in terms of a contract society. She claims that our society navigates economic, political and even social relationships with documents (Brandt, *Literacy in American Lives* 48).

Rosemary blames the lawyers and our litigious society for all the documentation required in the workplace. She and some of the other participants call documenting "CYA", in other words, "cover your ass". If a business person does not document everything they do for a client, or a nurse or teacher doesn't document what he or she does for a patient or student, that worker can be accused of wrong doing. For the first three participants, documenting was a huge part of their working lives. For Cookie, keeping an accurate paper trail was her whole job, and key to earning a place of trust in the upscale shop. For Barbara, documenting the specialized lesson plans, tracking the progress and services provided for her students was part and parcel of her job. Documentation was important for her to get and keep her job as a trusted special education teacher. For Gabrielle, increasing requirements for documentation allowed nurses to defend their medical choices and eventually have the power to diagnose. Even the participants who broke boundaries and succeeded in occupations dominated by men began their careers using their literacies to document. Rosemary at the start of her career in insurance had to write business letters to document client interactions. Ms. B still had to document lesson plans and Patricia still

had to file appeals and other court documents. All of these participants proved to be good at documentation and used documentation to their advantage.

The participants who broke boundaries surpassed documentation by using an awareness of ethos and audience. They all showed an acute understanding of audience and ethos arguably more than the other participants. They understood writing to document as well. They used their literacies in the form of documentation along with their acute awareness of audience and ethos to not only achieve success in the workplace, but to go beyond documentation. These participants, Ms. B, Rosemary, Olivia, and Patricia were able to gain enough authority in the workplace to write their own documents that they, and their employers deemed more important than documentation. In the course of their careers they wrote financial reports to the board of directors, company policies and procedures, legal briefs as well as have a voice on a mayoral task force. Their literacy skills extended beyond documentation, and helped them gain authority in professions that had been previously dominated by men.

It is interesting that with all the participants, documentation and writing seemed to be intertwined with authority. These participants gained authority through their documentary writing. Gabrielle and her patient charting is a good example of that. Her medical knowledge was highlighted in the documentation required of her as a nurse. In time, her documentation played a part in doctors taking her diagnoses seriously and being able to write her own exact statements or diagnoses. As Olivia improved her writing skills over the course of her career, she was promoted. She understood that good writing skills were important for promotions. Rosemary went from not having any authority to write to being able to compose and sign her own business letters to being able to write company policy.

It is clear that the participants' literacies are intertwined with their accomplishments in their respective fields. What is less clear, and even messy, is how the participants learned the literacies that helped them in their working lives, and the role of education. Rosemary and Olivia's stories in particular complicate our understanding of how education and literacies impact economic growth and success. These participants achieved upper echelon positions in male dominated fields without college degrees. While Rosemary was educated in a private Catholic all girls' school and never had difficulties writing, Olivia was always more comfortable with numbers. She was promoted even though she felt as if writing was her worst subject and therefore went on a career long quest to improve her writing. Gabrielle doesn't consider herself a college graduate even though she went to nursing school in a three-year program. She still understood that writing in the form of charting was necessary, and a path to showing her medical knowledge, defending her medical choices, and eventually making nursing diagnoses. So how do we explain their literate lives?

Rosemary and Olivia's stories in particular might be partially explained by Graff's research in "The Literacy Myth at Thirty", which was quoted earlier in this research. He believes that literacy is important but it is complicated, and far from the only issue in understanding economic mobility and status. Graff argues that,

Literacy- that is- literacy by itself- is now conceptualized as individually transformative, To the contrary, we now anticipate and recognize its impact to be shaped by specific historical circumstances, complicated rather than simple, incomplete or uneven,

interactive rather than determinative, and mediated by a host of other intervening factors of a personal, structural or cultural historical nature, rather than universal. (641)

Graff argues for literacy to be understood as one contributing, interactive factor among many others personal, historical and cultural that determine any person's economic mobility. In that literacy was one tool the participants used, and not the sole means of success as evidenced by Rosemary's quote about "guts", these participants seem to bear Graff's research out. Their literacies, including their ability to document and their awareness of ethos and audience were assets to them in their working lives. The rest was perhaps their individual drive to succeed and the new opportunities made available to them by second wave feminism and the economic change from traditional capitalism to fast capitalism.

This research is perhaps a start in understanding how women used literacy to succeed in positions previously dominated by men. It is interesting that literacy was seen as mostly positive by these particular participants which may further complicate Graff's already complicated ideas. None of the participants set out to be writers of course. Gabrielle and Barbara both thought that the increasing documentation was difficult. They viewed their jobs as taking care of patients and students, not documenting. Some of the participants still had to take care of their families outside of the workplace. The work of documentation sometimes did cause long hours at the office and interfered with family life. The increased responsibility indeed weighed heavily on some participants too. At the same time, however, they understood and accepted that documenting was part and parcel of what they had to do to keep their jobs. They understood the purpose of the documentation they had to do. Even though they thought it was excessive, Gabrielle particularly

understood that documenting in the form of charting was her only means of defending her medical choices and gaining authority. The participants who broke boundaries, with the exception of Olivia, liked to write and fully understood the power of language and of the signature. They saw writing as part and parcel of the jobs they needed to do. They understood also, the power of using ethos and audience in writing to improve their position. Even Olivia, who really liked numbers better, went on a career long quest to improve her writing because she saw it as necessary to her success in the business workplace. Overall, for these participants, the benefits of writing outweighed the negative aspects of it. Writing for them was a tool to be used for their benefit in order to secure good jobs, and eventually, authority in the workplace. Writing was a tool for some to succeed in occupations previously not open to women. During the years when women were first going into the workplace, these participants, were willing to do whatever it took to succeed in their occupations, and if that meant being able to document and write, they did it. Writing may have been only one mediating tool within these participants' working lives, but I would argue that the participants saw it as an extremely important one. They were willing to use any tool, particularly writing, to their advantage and these participants did just that.

Of course, as we look at these findings, we must remember that this is a small study, and can only speak for a small segment of women and their working lives and literacies. It is important that we continue to study women's literacies during this important social and historical intersection with larger studies that include even more women of diverse races, ethnicities and occupations. It would be most interesting to explore if the findings of this small study hold true in a larger, more inclusive study.

## **APPENDIX: APPROVAL LETTER**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Melanie A. Barton-Gauss**

Date: **February 24, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 02/24/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: Project Title: At the Intersection of Feminism and Fast  
Capitalism: A Study of Women's Workplace Literacies During a  
Time of Change  
Investigator: Melanie A Barton-Gauss  
IRB Number: SBE-16-12012  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 02/24/2016 04:27:26 PM EST

IRB Manager

## LIST OF REFERENCES

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