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Mapping the Mess: a Literate Activity Method for Teacher Research on Civic Literacies in Writing Classrooms

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MAPPING THE MESS: A LITERATE ACTIVITY METHOD FOR TEACHER RESEARCH ON CIVIC LITERACIES IN WRITING CLASSROOMS

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Faced with an increasing need in higher education to address civic issues and prepare students for participation in democratic discussion, rhetoric and writing classrooms have become one space for including civic literacies, and meeting institutional demand for civic engagement. However, the complexities of changing tools, platforms, and means of civic participation require a similarly complex method for investigating teacher and student work and how to approach incorporating civic literacies into the writing and rhetoric classroom. Using a literate activity research method, teachers can incorporate concepts such as divergent uptake to guide their approaches for putting teacher and student materials in conversation with each other, to help investigate how learning is functioning in the classroom.

KEYWORDS: literate activity research, writing studies, divergent uptake, reading studies, civic literacy

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In November 2016, when I was a senior in my undergraduate studies, I remember waking up with a searing sense of fear and bleakness. I had always seen myself as a politically conscious individual- in my teen and college years, I worked to advocate for causes important to me, including reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and racial equality. Despite the fraught political climate raging around me, every day I saw engaged community members around me, fighting for change. But that morning, I remember feeling the weight as much of the campus seemed to deflate around me. I remember my classmates asking our professors, "what do we do?" There were a range of answers, of course– many told us to have hope and keep fighting as we always had, while others dismissed student fears, telling us that nothing would likely change– "politics don't matter that much."

Now in 2024, the world remains at the crossroads of upheaval. I watch as my students face gun violence, and oppression. I watch as students, classmates, and colleagues, face arrest for engaging in exactly the kind of civil protest our universities have encouraged them to participate in. I watch as higher education continues to become hostile toward marginalized groups, whether that be through the targeting of anything deemed "critical race theory", the banning of books, or increasing violence and violent rhetoric toward queer, and particularly transgender, individuals. Only now, I find myself in the position my professors were in years ago– being asked what to do, while asking the same of myself.

While I have always incorporated public writing and civic engagement in my writing courses, it wasn't until I taught a course called "Rhetoric for Civic Literacy" that I was really asked to consider: what is the role of rhetoric and the study and practice of writing in the kinds of

public issues and conversation I describe above? Now that I was being asked to specifically teach about the role of writing in creating "democratic citizens", I had to think about what that meant to me as a teacher, and, in turn, how to teach something incredibly important, but also complex, made up of a wide variety of people, practices and tools.

Because of the complexities mentioned above, I did not expect to answer these questions in a single semester, or for that matter, in a single dissertation. But, in the fall of 2022, I taught the course for the first time, and in doing so, found how difficult teaching the course proved to be. And so, as I turned to research and what I wanted to find out about teaching civic issues in the writing and rhetoric classroom, I started the work of describing the practices we engaged in throughout the course, and parsing through which practices helped us engage in the difficult work of studying how people individually and collectively grapple with the kinds of issues I describe earlier in this chapter. As I continued teaching the course in the spring of 2023, I continued to modify the ways I approached the course, and eventually, formalized my research by studying materials from the fall 2023 version of the course, which formed the basis for this dissertation.

This project is made up of the practices and frameworks used in the course design I created for the fall 2023 iteration of the course, as well as a close examination of the ways my memories of the course planning process intersected with my own course materials, and student writing throughout the course. Additionally, this project details the specific research practices I engaged in to study the complex ways that learning occurred in the course, in both expected and unexpected ways. I describe how I used a literate activity research methodology to show how the practices of the course shaped learning in particular ways, moving from the materials I created and the values present in those materials, to the ways students engaged with these materials in

particular ways, and how both teacher and student created materials interacted with my own narrative about the course as I wrote this dissertation.

My work on this project provides insight into the unique challenges of teaching civic literacy concepts in relation to writing and rhetoric by describing the different practices students and I engaged in, and how these practices were taken up. The challenges discussed in this project include the complexities of mapping the ways our embodied identities and affiliations shape our approach to new information, tracing the practices we engage in when we seek information using different tools and platforms, and how we turn those understandings into different kinds of actions. My work also provides an example of the equally complex methods I used in order to research the practices of the course. By using a literate activity research methodology of teacher research, informed by learning research, I demonstrate one way for teachers to understand their own practices, through the comparison of memory, teacher materials, and student work. While I do not claim to provide one-size-fits-all advice for teachers, I describe how being attuned to the ways learning is situated and contextual can help teachers create more useful activities for learners.

In this chapter, I'll begin by describing some of the terms that foreground my literate activity focused approach to teacher-research, which shaped my data collection and analysis, and allowed me to better explain the multifaceted and multidirectional uptakes of the course, and provide a map for understanding the complex interactions between people, tools, and texts that shaped learning in the course, and the research process for me. Then, I will describe some of the challenges I found in specifically describing civic literacies learning, including how and where civic literacies work is occurring, before providing an overview of the remaining chapters.

Rhetorical Genre Studies

In teaching writing, my background is primarily in rhetorical genre studies and literate activity theory pedagogy. While I will go into more detail about how these terms affected my research throughout later chapters, I want to briefly lay out in the introduction some fundamentals of how I see these fields impacting how I approached teaching a course on civic literacies.

First, rhetorical genre studies (RGS) developed from the research of writing studies scholars like Carolyn Miller, Amy Devitt, Anis Bawarshi, Mikhail Bakhtin, Charles Bazerman, John Swales, Mary Jo Reiff, Elizabeth Wardle, and others. In Miller's landmark piece "Genre as Social Action", they explore "the connection between genre and recurrent situation and the way in which genre can be said to represent typified rhetorical action." (p. 151) Miller does this in order to describe how genres "must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish." (p. 151)

To provide a very simplified explanation of what this means, rhetorical genres function as tools that shape and enable human interactions. For instance, Bawarshi and Reiff, composition scholars and editors of the book, *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research and Pedagogy*, describe how writing teachers "turn the physical space of a classroom into a course such as a graduate seminar on rhetorical theory, a biology course, or a first-year composition course through various genres" (2010, p. 80), including examples such as syllabi, course schedules, assignment instructions, and other documents as ways that genres both shape and respond to the purposes of the course. For example, the syllabus is a rhetorical genre that is used to mediate the work of the classroom, and shape what kind of work is possible in that space. For my own research, RGS approaches informed both my own understandings of the activities and

goals of the class, and the methods I used to examine the uptakes I saw in the work of the course. Here, I will describe first how RGS informed my approach to course design, and then how it informed my approach to research practices.

RGS Approaches to Genre in the Classroom

For my project, RGS first shaped how I approached course design as part of my research. When planning the course, I had to decide what genres I would want students to create, and subsequently, what practices they would need to learn to be able to make those genres. RGS also played a role in the kinds of texts, in various genres, I provided students to engage with as part of the various activities and practices of the classroom. Once I decided what students were going to make throughout the course, I had to identify what genres were used to do the work of civic literacies. I ended up pulling from a variety of texts, including textbook chapters, popular news articles, YouTube videos, documentaries, podcasts, and more to make up the work of the classroom.

However, students were not only looking at these genres to learn concepts and terms. They also had to identify what genres are used in the world to enact "democratic participation." And so, genre studies mattered to my course design because the genres I assigned students to analyze and create mediated the practices involved in civic literacies which I will describe throughout this project. In order to describe the ways we navigate civic literacies within a writing studies context, we also need to understand which kinds of texts are used in public spheres, and in what ways. And so, an RGS perspective on course design helped me to think about which texts mediated public action, and which productions would help students engage in the practices used in civic literacies.

RGS Approaches to Research

In addition to my course design, RGS principles also informed my research methods, because they influenced the kinds of productions I collected to research, and the way I viewed those productions as part of the study. My study is comprised from both teacher-created and student-created materials that emerged from the Fall 2023 iteration of the "Rhetoric as Civic Literacy course. These materials include: the course syllabus, an abbreviated bibliography of assigned course texts, instructions for major and minor course assignments, instructions for in-class course activities, notes from both in-class, and out of class teacher observations, student created projects and assignments, and finally, the feedback I left on these student productions.

These various objects of analysis represent a wide variety of genres, that span purpose, audience, and modes. For example, a teacher-created assignment sheet, designed for a specific classroom, is a genre in itself, that then informs the creation of yet another genre that students will create. That student production, like the assignment sheet, is ultimately created for the classroom, and while we discuss outside audiences, these projects do not always leave the classroom they were created for. By contrast, many of the texts assigned to read throughout the course are genres not created for educational spaces. For example, when one assignment asks students to find outside texts about an issue of their choice to bring to class, that artifact is an example of a genre created for a non-classroom purpose, that has been changed by being used for pedagogical purposes. So, in terms of my research methods, RGS informed not only what kinds of productions being studied, but also how I understood the purposes of these materials as they existed in the classroom space.

Literate Activity Research Approaches to Course Design and Research

The texts that mediate civic conversations are only one piece of course design, however. I also had to consider what people do with those genres, and what kinds of actors, actions, and embodied experiences also mediate what we call civic literacies. To help describe these practices, I relied on literate activity research, as explained by writing studies and educational theory scholars like Vygotsky, Paul Prior, Jody Shipka, Joyce Walker, Dylan Dryer, Lunsford, Mary Sheridan-Rabideau, Derek Van Ittersum, and Kevin Roozen to help examine the complex systems that make up civic life. I used an understanding of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), which is the "synthesis that has brought together Vygotskyan psychology, Voloshinovian and Bakhtinian semiotics, Latour's actor-network theory, and situated, phenomenological work in sociology and anthropology" (Prior et. al, 2007, p. 17). Under the umbrella of literate activity, CHAT refers to how "activity is situated in concrete interactions that are simultaneously improvised locally and mediated by historically-provided tools and practices, which range from machines, made-objects, semiotic means (e.g., languages, genres, iconographies), and institutions to structured environments, domesticated animals and plants, and, indeed, people themselves" (p. 17). For civic literacies, that means that groups and individuals use particular tools, including texts, to facilitate interactions with others to achieve certain goals, within the contextual and institutional constraints of a given rhetorical situation.

To use an example, I turn to a common act of civic participation: voting. In order to vote, there are several complex activity systems people must navigate. People must first navigate different methods of registering to vote, which could include websites, phone calls, texting campaigns, door to door canvassing, and potentially even more means. These means also differ from state to state, meaning that the institutional hierarchies one must navigate depend on the

participant's location, which is also imbued in ideological and political struggle inherent to how each state's political system regulates voting, in combination with different biases and agendas. In addition to any forms used to register, the voter then receives a voter registration card, which includes information about where and how to vote– yet another genre used in this activity system. By the time the participant shows up to vote, they navigate yet another set of interactions with elections workers, who eventually provide the voter with a ballot, that could potentially be either paper or digital. Even this explanation, which severely undercuts the complexity of voting, illustrates the sheer breadth of practices, tools, and interactions necessary for navigating civic literacies. And so, when approaching civic literacies from a literate activity research standpoint, I wanted the course design to make these intertwined activities visible. It was not as simple as explaining how to participate; instead, we would need to navigate the specific systems students wanted to navigate, and investigate the myriad ways of exploring the activities of civic participation, and defining for ourselves what that even meant.

Literate Activity in Course Design

As an example of how literate activity research shaped my course design, I will explain some of the considerations I made while planning the course. One concept I considered was where civic literacy work is happening. When teaching projects involving civic literacies in past classes, students tended to struggle with identifying topics to research that both connected to their own lives, and fulfilled the work of the course. Anticipating a similar struggle in the ENG 183 course, I drew on previous work I had done researching online communities to inform how I approached the concept of "community" in the course, in ways that used LAR research to remind me of how complex the activity systems of each community were. I had to consider the formality of the boundaries of the community. For example, a sports team on a particular campus often has

formal rules, and bounds of communication. Meanwhile, more loosely defined groups, like friend groups, often do not have the same level of formal documentation of how the group operates, instead relying on unspoken norms.

In addition to social boundaries as an aspect of communities, the tools and genres that mediated community interactions also informed my course design. For example, the kinds of spaces communities used to communicate were part of how I asked students to trace their communities. The communication within communities students examined through the work of the class spanned physical space, platforms, and tools used to facilitate communication. According to Dan Melzer's definition of discourse communities[1], such communities share both genres and means of sharing information within group members (Melzer, 2020, p. 102). From an LAR perspective, understanding the means of sharing information within communities meant understanding the various spaces (both physical and digital) communities use to communicate, and the tools and platforms that facilitate communication. In my course design started from an assumption that the tools of civic literacy for students would be social media, their phones and computers, and that they already had ideas about the communities they were in, and issues they cared about in those communities.

However, many factors complicated the notions I had about tool use as part of the activity within students' communities, including myths of students as "digital natives", which have been challenged by writing studies and rhetoric scholars such as Jenae Cohn (2016) and Angela Haas, Emily Legg, and Gabriela Rios (2014). Cohn discusses the ways that student literacy narratives demonstrated how digital tools and literacies were undervalued by the students themselves, while Haas, Legg, and Rios describe how "digital nativism" is rooted in colonialist language, which

[1] Paraphrased from John Swales. I use Melzer's definition because it is the definition I use in the course, and I want to use the same language I used for students, which differs slightly from Swales

promotes generational divides in addition to promoting a false narrative about student tool use. In terms of my own practices, these notions about tools use related to CHAT terms production and ecology[23], in that they caused me to create projects which encouraged students to trace both how they were using various tools in the communities, as well as how the social, and physical contexts shaped their interactions. While this is just one example of how LAR shaped my course design, it serves to describe the ways that being attuned to how literate activity functions in complex ways caused me to design projects with similar complexity.

Literate Activity in Research Methods

While I will describe my specific literate activity research methodology for this study in greater detail later in this project, I want to briefly mention how a literate activity research methodology impacted my collection and analysis of materials. The work of literate activity scholars Paul Prior, Janine Solberg, Patrick Berry. Hannah Bellwoar. Bill Chewning, Karen J. Lunsford, Liz Rohan, Kevin Roozen, Mary P. Sheridan-Rabideau, Jody Shipka, Derek Van Ittersum, and Joyce Walker uses "mapping" to describe one iteration of literate activity research methods. In their text "Re-situating and re-mediating the canons: A cultural-historical remapping of rhetorical activity" (2007), they use the word "mapping" to describe the process of displaying the various aspects of literate activity that earlier rhetorical research attends to incompletely, using CHAT as a framework for explaining the mapping process.

In my work, I used a similar method of mapping and tracing activity to describe the practices I saw in my objects of analysis. I relied on my memory of the course planning process, based on earlier materials and my own notes, as well as my current narrative of the course, which

[2] Production- "the tools, practices, and contexts that shape the formation of a text" (Prior, et. al, 2007, p. 20)

[3] Ecology- the world, "which enables and constrains all the previous functions and which may also be a domain of rhetorical action "(Prior. Et. al, 2007, p. 21)

was informed by the teacher and student created objects I describe in the previous section. Using these objects, I map the connections I saw between documents, and between my memory and the text as it was written. Through these methods, I use LAR to describe the complex ways I saw civic literacies displayed in a complex set of practices within these objects. The remainder of this project is a story of how these methods emerged, a description of the methods themselves, and a detailed map of the findings from mapping literate activity.

Chapter Overview

The remainder of this dissertation begins with an overview of existing definitions of civic literacy, and the frameworks that were key to both my course design and the analysis of the resulting course materials and productions I studied. I begin by discussing the existing definitions of civic literacies and its related terms. Then, I describe three categories of practices that comprise what I mean when I refer to civic literacies: identity literacies, information literacies, and action-focused literacies. After defining these practices, I define two frameworks that were central to my investigation of course materials. The first, uptake, which I approach from both a RGS and literate activity research approach, describes how people navigate different metacognitive processes in order to process habitual and situated dispositions towards learning, as well as the learning practices that emerge from our experiences. The second framework, strategic reading, refers to the act of reading different texts, broadly defined, is comprised of complex literate activity systems, and as such is not one act, but a series of interrelated practices.

In the third chapter, I focus on the task of explaining the specific literate activity research approach I used to form the basis of my teacher research. The approach I describe uses memory, narrative, and document-based research to map the complex activity systems I observed in the materials I studied. Informed by research-based perspectives on the psychology of learning, I

explain how literate activity research principles helped me to approach my objects of analysis in a way that mapped and traced the ways my own and students' uptakes worked to shape the interactions of the classroom, as well as what these uptakes reveal about the challenges of civic literacies learning. Based on these methodologies, I describe the methods of analysis that emerged, and my specific approach to examining the objects I collected from the course for my study.

In the fourth chapter, I provide a detailed description of the work of the course, focusing on the places where the activities of the course made particular uptakes visible. I analyze my own course materials, describing both how I viewed my goals and intentions at the time I created these productions, as well as how those goals and assumptions shaped the materials in unintended ways. I also analyze student work, in particular focusing on the ways that students' differing uptakes exemplify the complex nature of learning, especially within a civic literacies context. Through these examples, I describe how the concept of uptake provides a glimpse into how the documentation of learning practices can be used to resist a reductive understanding of how learning is operationalized in classroom spaces.

In the fifth chapter, I return to the first unit of the course, and introduce the second unit, to compare how I used texts to guide the activities of the course. In the fifth chapter, I revisit course materials, this time focusing on the evolution in how I understood "reading" as a specific practice that supports learning. My goal in this chapter is to outline how my new understanding of reading as not one singular activity learners do, but as a complex set of activities shaped by both the articulated goals of the instructor and the various ways readings are used as part of the work of the course. Ultimately, this chapter proposes that by understanding reading as a

complex series of practices that connect to learning, teachers can make decisions about how to make reading a more purposeful and useful part of their courses.

Finally, I end this project by describing how the activities described in the context of one course can be applied to a broader set of classrooms. My hope in this project is that learners at different levels and areas can see first how civic literacies describe a variety of skills and practices, and that a wide set of flexible tools is needed for navigating the complicated landscape described in this chapter. I also hope to show the value as an educator of examining my own practices by engaging in research. My method of looking at my own work in conversation with student work allowed me to understand the class materials with more depth and interest, and provided valuable insight into my own understanding of my role as a teacher.

CHAPTER II: PARSING COMPLEXITY: IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIES FOR NAVIGATING COMPLEX CIVIC LITERACIES

Since I am talking about learning, and the ways learning is complex, there are several threads of scholarship within writing studies, rhetorics, educational psychology, and literacy research that I am using to approach civic literacies in the classroom. In order to describe the various interconnected knowledges required to navigate the information ecosystems that make up public discourse, I have sorted these knowledges into three categories based on what instructors expect students to be able to do in civic literacy classrooms: identity literacies, information literacies, and action-focused literacies. Each of these categories attends to a different set of knowledges encompassed within the term "civic literacies." In this chapter, I will unpack these literacies and then introduce two frameworks (uptake and strategic reading as literate activity) that can be used to teach them.

Identity literacies refer to the ways we ask students to name the identities and communities that shape how we interact with the world; articulate how these factors influence how we absorb and act upon information; question our conceptions of our and others' communities to identify places where disconnect occurs; and develop strategies for managing the negative responses we have when our worldviews are called into question by others or by new information (Baker-Bell, 2020; Banks, 2011; Black, 2009; Crisco, 2009; Cui, 2019; Dolmage, 2017; Wardle and Mercer-Clement, 2016). **Information literacies** refer to when we ask students to find sources using a variety of search techniques and contexts; trace the ways that information travels within different ecosystems; place different texts within their rhetorical contexts; and comprehend a variety of texts based on their rhetorical awareness (Buck, 2012; Cohn, 2016: D'Ignazio and Bhargava, 2020; Haas, et al., 2011; Haas, Legg, and Rios, 2014; Lee, 2018;

Noorgaard, 2004). Finally, **action-focused literacies** refer to how we ask students to learn about how power is distributed and negotiated within different communities; learn about the decision-making processes within these communities; study the various histories of communities and how they fit into larger social structures; and make decisions about how to intervene in spaces they want to create change within, including choices about genre, content, and persuasive methods (Crisco, 2009; Cui, 2019; Ratcliffe, 1999; Smitherman, 2004). While this list of potential literacies will likely not feature every possible topic that could be covered in a civic literacies-minded classroom, I believe it covers a strong group of knowledges and practices that are essential to defining what civic literacies invite us to do.

In compiling different facets of civic literacies, I have then identified two frameworks which I believe provide teachers and students with language and structures for practicing the literacies described above. While I will describe these frameworks in more depth later in the chapter, I introduce them here because my use of them is informed by the three core literacy categories I have identified early on. The first framework, uptake, refers to the different metacognitive processes involved in unpacking one's habitual practices and dispositions towards learning. While uptake has been partially integrated into composition studies to explore how incorporating metacognitive work impacts studying how students write (Dryer, 2016; Wardle and Mercer-Clement, 2016; Medina, 2019). I believe extending this work into civic literacies education is useful because it is a framework that allows us to examine identities and practices, trace activity, and ultimately make decisions based on our metacognitive awareness, by choosing between strategies that we have compiled over time, instead of relying on default strategies without intention.

Another framework attuned to both civic literacies and metacognition is conceptualizing reading practices as literate activity. Reading practices are additionally related to the three literacies I use to frame my research because our antecedent experiences with and feelings toward reading affect our ability to engage with texts in various contexts; because information literacies require us to read different kinds of texts, for different purposes, and therefore require an arsenal of reading strategies chosen purposefully; and because reading is comprised of active practices, which allow us to learn more about the communities and systems we want to act within. In short, without understanding how our reading strategies shift with the ecosystems we find ourselves in, it is difficult to participate in public life with intention at all, instead of reverting to unhelpful, habitual practices of reading avoidance and misunderstanding or misuse. If people cannot comprehend what they are reading, in a variety of genres and content areas, there is very little that can be accomplished in a classroom centered on civic literacy. However, in my own experience, while I have encountered many resources on how to effectively teach writing within composition studies, there is less research within rhetoric, composition, and writing studies that directly studies reading practices apart from writing. Indeed, most of the research on reading I describe later in this chapter emerges from educational psychology, which at times intersects with and at times differs from a literate activity research perspective. In my teaching experience, writing instructors often assign readings, but don't know what to *do* with them, especially when students don't or can't read and comprehend them. Therefore, a framework that addresses reading as a set of strategies, based on context, genre, and other factors, similar to how literate activity research has impacted writing studies, is useful in making explicit how students choose between reading strategies in different situations.

Together, these two frameworks help to address the complexities involved when teaching civic literacies, whether that is the direct focus of the course or not. The work encompassed in this chapter has unfolded over several semesters of planning, teaching, and revising, across course contexts and research opportunities in and out of the classroom. Therefore, it is my hope that this literature review works to compile the resources I used and to make available for teachers a starting place for teaching the kinds of literacies we value, yet do not always name, when trying to incorporate civic literacies into our classes. While there will always be limitations in any research study and in what we are able to teach in a single semester, I believe the coalescence of strategies from a variety of subject areas is necessary to begin understanding the complexities present in incorporating civic literacies into writing and rhetoric classrooms.

Definitions and Enactments of Civic Literacies

As discussed in chapter one, "civic literacy" is a broad and complex concept with many working definitions. Indeed, rather than one all-encompassing term, civic literacy can be better understood as civic literacies, or a group of interrelated practices that help people engage with the world. When considering the definitions I have found for civic literacies, I have found it useful to sort existing definitions of complex terms into noun and verb usages. For example, when civic literacies are used as a noun, they are understood as **qualities to be acquired**, but when civic literacies are understood as verbs, they are **practices or actions** that people use to engage in public life, making civic literacies the practices that mediate interactions between humans within communities. While I do not claim that a definition of civic literacies should be understood as either/or (noun or verb), I do think that the ways we conceptualize and name complex ideas affects how we approach teaching such outcomes.

For instance, there are many related terms that get used synonymously with civic literacy- notably, civic engagement, democratic citizenship, and public discourse. Before teaching a course with "civic literacy" in the title, I researched what course plans and textbooks existed to specifically address civic literacy outcomes and found that these terms were used interchangeably and often without a great deal of direct definition (Lazere and Womack, 2021; Melzer, 2020; Cutting, 2008). When looking through these textbooks, it occurred to me that the way that the outcomes listed above are discussed- as a singular concept or objective- were a barrier to my teaching. Even the course's name, Rhetoric as Civic Literacy, led my first question as a teacher to be "what is civic literacy, and how do I teach it?", rather than the more productive, "Which reading and writing practices do students need to practice in order to engage in issues within their communities?" While I will expand on the complications within the word "community" in later chapters, I keep the overall question broad here, because as a teacher, my scope was broad at the time I began planning. As a researcher, however, I found the scope of this question limiting, in ways I will explain in later chapters.

Once I began researching, I found that civic literacies are better understood as a set of skills and literacies, rather than one specific, all-encompassing concept that students are taught. Therefore, instead of using the words "skills" and "literacies" interchangeably, I instead approach the next section by thinking through the concepts I teach not by what they *are*, but instead by what they allow actors in the world to *do*. Put another way, civic literacies enable people to engage in particular ways of thinking, exhibited by the habitual actions they take over time, to take in information, process it, and express it through various genres and enactments. In the rest of this section, I have grouped together categories of literacies that encompass particular practices that are useful in constructing pathways for students to engage in civic life in

deliberate, conscious, and thoughtful ways, and lay the groundwork for future participatory and reflective actions. In doing so, I have sorted these knowledges into three broad categories: identity literacies, information literacies, and action-focused literacies.

Identity Literacies

In order to participate in any kind of civic context, people first need to be able to locate themselves within the communities that influence them, and where they have influence. Therefore, citizens need to be able to articulate their own identities, referencing multiple facets of their lives. Since such articulation is complex, we can break these identities into several sub-categories. Sub-categories of identity articulation can include identifying the roles we inhabit in our families and friend groups, but also where we work or plan to work; our embodied identities, including race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, and others; the environments that influence who we are; and potentially more. I place identity literacies first in this section because I believe it is foundational to any kind of work in civic literacies. Without being able to name and explain our previous experiences, we are incapable of fully examining new information because unquestioned predispositions prevent us from moving forward (Ambrose et. al, 2012).

What's more, identity articulation is related to both of the frameworks I've utilized, uptake and strategic reading. Uptake activities explicitly ask learners to address their prior experiences with course concepts, name how these experiences have affected one's thinking, and describe how that thinking has translated into action (Bastian, 2014). Similarly, when approaching a new text, learners often use their prior experience to decide where to begin reading (Ritchey and List, 2021). Without being able to name which strategies they are using, and how, it is difficult to make decisions about when a strategy may or may not be useful. Additionally, how students feel about reading in general will affect how they approach class

texts. If they don't see themselves as readers, they may approach a text with apathy, disinterest or anxiety. By contrast, a student who views themself as an avid reader may become disheartened if they find an unfamiliar text difficult.

And so in the rest of this section, I explore a few examples of the ways that identity influences the ways people interact with information in particular ways. Specifically in classrooms, when either students or teachers bring assumptions about identities they or others hold to the work of the class, these assumptions can limit the options we have for how to interact with other people or texts. For example, students may encounter resistance if something they read or do in class is perceived as attacking an identity or community they align with. For example, composition studies scholar Elizabeth Wardle worked with student Nicolette Mercer-Clement to describe how the student's working-class upbringing conflicted with an art history seminar she took, because of how it asked the student to critique artwork from her home community in ways that did not acknowledge the complexities of her lived experiences (2016, p. 161). For the classroom, then, when the messages from one's home community and university community counteract each other, students are called to respond in different ways, depending on their dispositions. For instance, "if a literate learner's dispositions incline him or her to be an obedient problem-solver no matter what the context, then the learner may encounter a critical transition when attempting to read and write assigned coursework as the teacher directs, even though material conflicts with the learner's home values and beliefs" (p. 163). In terms of uptake then, student's attitudes toward school generally, subject matter, and topics discussed combine to form their overall ability to take in new information.

Identity articulation is also tied to explicitly addressing how forces like racism, misogyny, ableism, transphobia, homophobia and classism create barriers to student growth. In

order to acknowledge how these systemic injustices work in the world, students need to be able to place themselves within these systems by naming where they fit. Such naming includes both marginalized identities and often unspoken identities, such as whiteness, because they are so often left unexamined. If a student, for example, can name the ways that being a white man has created different experiences for them than any Black woman when making decisions about how to travel around campus, these unspoken ways of knowing and being can be made explicit and lead to new frameworks for future examination, and hopefully new actions and interactions (Crenshaw, 1989; Ratcliffe, 1999).

When we can name and label our multifaceted identities, we're able to explore and articulate how these factors have shaped our dispositions toward particular ideas or actions. But even when we cannot name our identities, our past experiences nonetheless impact how we approach new situations. For example, a student articulating that they frequently received A's in high school may identify that they have internalized an identity as an "A Student". Then, in college, when the student receives a C on a paper, their disposition towards the class may change because it threatens their identity and disposition towards school. For this project, my goal would not be to change the student's disposition on the course– instead, I argue that it is better for the student to be aware of why their feelings changed, rather than to leave those perceptions unexamined. The point here is that whether or not they examine why they felt that way, it affects their actions. If they decide the class was pointless, they may not take similar classes in the future. If they instead internalize that they can't write, they may not pursue opportunities to write in future. Whatever emotional response is provoked by this experience, it impacts future actions. However, if students are able to examine those emotional responses, they may approach the situation differently, even if they come to the same conclusion. They can acknowledge that two

things are true: that they did not achieve the grade they wanted, and that it does not define them. Then, they are free to pursue the subject or not, but the choice is more deliberate. Our dispositions similarly influence civic literacies because, if we cannot articulate what experiences have shaped us, it is difficult to be deliberate in how we evaluate new information and how open we are to evaluating our own thought processes, particularly when those identities come into conflict with others or with new information.

While the decision of whether or not to pursue a particular course or subject might not be critically important, other decisions can hold more weight. For instance, a subject broached in my own classroom involved students questioning more and more what the value of their college education is and what rhetoric's role in that education is as well. Chase Bollig, a composition studies scholar (2015), addresses this debate, explaining that while many in composition disavow the worth of a college degree as being solely based in job training, we nonetheless cannot ignore the economic implications of an interdisciplinary model of education. Having students interrogate the narratives and assumptions they have involving their investment in their education, and who benefits from those narratives is an example of how identity literacies intersect with civic literacies in composition studies classrooms. The decision of whether to pursue higher education has financial, social, and emotional consequences, meaning that the decision should be made in a way that is conscious and deliberate, rather than based on unquestioned assumptions. My point is not that students should not question the worth of their education. On the contrary, being able to trace our values and identities can help us identify our options and make decisions between them, which is particularly true when certain options have not been made visible to use before.

Our choices are not only limited by our own perceptions or worldviews, however. The tools we have available to navigate our experiences also determine the approaches available to us. To use a seemingly low stakes example I encounter in my own teaching, we frequently talk about the role of considering the tools we use to plan and create texts (Prior et. al, 2007). I ask students which text processors they use for their school work: Microsoft Word? Google Docs? Notes app? Pen and paper? We have a discussion about why students chose the option they used, and many of us (including me!) indicate that they use the one they are most used to, or the one with the easiest interface. Regardless of their choice, the tool chosen nonetheless reveals something about the user's preferences, work style, and history, which is part of our identities. While I would not claim "Google Docs User" as an identity, I nonetheless understand how the actions I can take on one word processor could be different than the choices I can make on another, and over time, these seemingly small decisions begin to add up to larger parts of our identities.

To conclude this section on identity literacies, developing strategies to trace and name the different aspects that affect our approach to new situations, including our histories, values, dispositions, and even tool use, is one aspect of civic literacies because our habitual approaches to new information informs the options we have for how to respond. When we name these influences, we can better deliberate how to proceed in future situations. These future actions include the next category of literacies I will discuss, which involve how we make decisions about seeking information on different topics.

Information Literacies

In order to learn about the different events affecting the communities that make up their embodied identities, students must be able to seek out information on various social, cultural,

and political topics, process the information, and evaluate it in a way that allows them to be prepared to take some sort of action on it, whether that be adding it to our personal schemas, discarding it, sharing the information, or preparing to take other steps to act upon the information. While I will discuss what we *do* with information in the next set of literacies, information literacies specifically refers to the kinds of knowledges which allow us to find information, evaluate it, and decide how to proceed with using that knowledge in a variety of ways.

Information literacy is defined by writing and rhetoric scholar Rolf Noorgaard as the intersection between writing studies and library science (2004). The ability to understand and evaluate sources, particularly in online spaces, is a critical aspect of civic literacies, as source evaluation is complicated by factors like citizen advocacy, algorithms, misinformation and disinformation campaigns, and sponsored content. So, if literacies are understood here as the kind of practices certain frameworks allow us to engage in, information literacies are knowledges that enable us to engage in activities like finding sources on a certain topic; comprehending these sources in a way that allows us to identify its main argument and persuasive strategies; evaluating sources for credibility in various ways; and understanding how various information ecosystems work to impact the information that we can and cannot access (Noorgard, 2004; Jamieson and Howard, 2013).

To begin, strategies for finding information in a variety of places is a key skill set. However, teaching these strategies presents several challenges. First, the sheer volume of information available to people is simply higher than it has been in the past. Increased accessibility of information is both a democratizing force and a force that can increase misinformation and disinformation (Carillo and Horning, 2021). In order to sort through the

deluge of information available, students need multiple strategies, rather than relying on the global strategies that they often carry with them from past experiences. For example, the strategies for navigating an academic database are different from sifting through information on social media– and indeed, the strategies may vary from database to database, and from platform to platform.

To address this aspect of information-seeking strategies, archival literacies may be one area that can provide insight into how to approach the different kinds of informational spaces available. Feminist rhetorical archivists and rhetoric scholars Jessica Enoch and Pamela VanHaitsma (2015) address this difficulty as they describe the ways that online spaces act as archives, and that, as such, archival literacy is a useful methodology to have students participate in. Because civic life is increasingly intertwined with digital life, being able to participate in public conversation requires a keen understanding of how the digital spaces that students already inhabit can function as digital archives. By treating different spaces that students may encounter when doing independent research, on and offline, as archives, we can develop a more diverse pool of strategies for navigating these spaces, and open up the conversation beyond what students may have learned in earlier stages of education, such as "never use Wikipedia" or "only use sites that end with .org", which provide a starting point but limit pathways for developing more robust habits. Uptake as a conceptual framework is important to the development of these information literacies because it asks students to trace the activities and metacognitive processes they use when seeking sources, which then allows them to articulate what their chosen strategies allow them to do, as well as what these strategies restrict them from doing.

Beyond finding sources, though, as Enoch and VanHaitsma caution, there is a difference between simply giving students access to digital spaces and teaching them how to evaluate and

assess them. Indeed, they argue that "it is crucial to pause before asking students to leverage digital archival materials in their writing projects and prompt them first to read these archives carefully and critically" (2015, p. 217). I address a similar point later in this chapter, but while the authors are writing directly about digital archival materials, I know from my own teaching that in the absence of robust textbooks for teaching civic literacies, many instructors, such as myself, create our own archives of existing materials, including print journalism, online articles, and social media, to teach about public discourse. I found, however, that despite citing the importance of archival literacies above, I had not seen my curation of texts for classes as archival work, and so I discuss later in this project how important it is for both teachers and students to consider how texts in related contexts relate to each other to build a larger understanding of given issues.

However, as I will explore when I discuss a framework of strategic reading, students often do not have a variety of strategies for engaging with these texts, and subsequently read them without a plan or strategy in mind. For example, in my capacity as a reading researcher separate from this project, many students indicate that they read from beginning to end, without a clear idea of how they should prioritize the information they are reading. When we approach all readings the same, regardless of context or purpose, it is difficult to make space for students to engage with work that allows them to make their own conclusions from texts. Therefore, as I describe later in this chapter, a framework of strategic reading is needed to not only find information in a variety of ways, but also process and understand that information using a variety of strategies.

The current strategies available for information seeking are evolving, and tools that have been taught for years paint an incomplete picture of what students need to find credible

information– with a caveat that these strategies were always incomplete. Between disinformation campaigns, sponsored information, and the accessibility of social media as a means to information, we can see how understanding how to discern what to listen to is a daunting task. However, for many reasons, curriculums have not always been able to keep up with the changing information landscape. Two contributing factors affecting students and teachers are assumptions of digital expertise and a lack of understanding of social media and other online tools for information seeking(Cohn, 2016; Haas, Legg, and Rios, 2014). Therefore, activities based explicitly in uptake and activity tracing can be useful in discovering exactly what students are doing when they search for information.

An example of this from my curriculum includes a unit where students are taught explicitly about the changing nature of information literacy, where I ask them to seek out sources on topics relevant to college students. As they work on finding sources from spaces like social media and the larger web, I ask them to document their research and information-seeking practices, in accordance with other class activities and strategies for information-seeking behavior, and based on research on lateral reading strategies (Carillo and Horning, 2021). This is important because research does not just happen in classroom spaces– it simply goes unnamed. For instance, say I hear about a new proposal for a traffic light in the community. The various research actions I may participate in include: using a search engine to find more information, where I would have to parse through different websites, making decisions about which are credible; searching for a Facebook or X page for the city board; using social media to see what other community members are saying; contacting friends and family members to see what they know. In total, through this search I have used a number of resources, but without actually tracing my activities, I am just reacting on impulse, rather than examining the choices I made

about who and what to trust. This lack of examination becomes dangerous when considering the role of search algorithms and unconscious bias in decision making. If my social media or search engine, or even my social circle, is limited, then there may be information I don't have access to, which limits the information I can use to make informed decisions. By being able to name the resources and activities students engage in when finding information, they learn to slow down and consider what information may be missing, which means that when doing research outside of the classroom, they may be more likely to pause to consider what information they may not have considered.

The importance of source evaluation is particularly present in data literacy, as explained by feminist data liceracy scholars Catherine D'Ignazio and Rahul Bhargava (2020). In order to interpret studies, documents, and arguments disseminated publicly to influence public opinion, students need to understand how data is used, and to what ends, as well as common data manipulations. In other words, understanding where data comes from and proper study methodologies is another kind of information literacy. In order to understand and comprehend information, we need strategies for reading images and data, as much as reading text. Without the ability to understand how data is organized and shared, it is easy for studies to be misinterpreted, intentionally or unintentionally, which means people take action based on incorrect or incomplete information. While I address reading comprehension later in this piece, I mention it here as part of information literacies because it is another subset of knowledges that enables people to act in informed and conscious ways. Since people can only act on the information they have, giving students strategies for seeking and assessing information is another foundation set of literacies to be addressed in civic literacy learning.

Finally, the ways in which students are taught information seeking and evaluation strategies intersects with the structural inequalities and identities mentioned above. When I teach, students and I often talk about the concept of ethos as it relates to whose voices are upheld and believed in popular contexts, versus who is derided or seen as untrustworthy (Ryan, 2020). For example, when discussing topics in previous classes like student loan debt, we have had to unpack how articles students have found have discussed individuals with more debt, or less income, as "vermin". Such language dehumanizes those in the class with debt, as well as intersecting with other identities, as well as Hanson's (2024) findings about higher rates of debt among non-white students. Thus, information literacies intersect with identity literacies by asking students to articulate how our identities inform how we evaluate sources and what we see as credible. Strategies presented without nuance, such as stating that students shouldn't use Wikipedia, fail to account for the many nuances present in how information relates to our social identities, perceptions of others, and understandings of a variety of texts. To conclude this section on information literacies, the pathways we use to find, evaluate, and comprehend a variety of texts create different options for how to use those texts for many purposes. In the next section, I describe how I conceptualize civic literacies as choosing between pathways for different actions.

Action-Focused Literacies

Based on the scaffolding of knowledges as I have constructed them, the third set of literacies are action-focused literacies. As alluded to in the last section, after people have processed new information, they need to act on it in some way—including reflection or rejection as possible actions. Therefore, action-focused literacies are strategies that enable people to: research the decision-making powers within a community, including relevant power structures;

study the histories of community ecosystems; identify different methods of intervention, including exploring the act of discovery and reflection as a powerful action in itself; and finally, decide how to move forward purposefully, choosing between strategies and genres for collectivist action as well as strategies for individual reflection.

For a definition of action-focused literacies, I pull from literacy and composition pedagogy scholar Virginia Crisco's iteration of activist literacy, which they define as "the rhetorical use of literacy for civic participation" (2009, p. 32). Under this definition, civic literacy is not only a concept, but a set of knowledges and actions people use to enact change in their communities. Furthermore, Crisco states that an activist literacy is "action oriented, not just the act in and of itself, but the thinking, planning, decision-making, reading, writing, action, and reflection that surround the act" (p. 32). Through this definition, an activist literacy describes all the actions that lead up to and are involved in being a community member.

To be clear, the definition provided above is not the only version of activist literacy, but Crisco's definition has been transferred to other pedagogical contexts, such as in language and literacy scholar Cheu-Jey Lee's analysis of principles such as cultural diversity within activist literacies (2018). Therefore, I use Crisco's definition as a foundation because of the ways it is attuned to civic participation as based in community and identification. As they explain, "community is a metaphor for the variety of groups within a democratic society that represent particular values and ideas" (Crisco, 2009, p. 41). Therefore, by asking students to examine what values are important to them, along with the communities they see those values enacted in, they can gain a sense of place in civic participation. Furthermore, Crisco goes on to say that "activists do not respond to individuals, they respond to groups of people who have similar ideas that are located within our social structures" (p. 41). Thus, by centering communities in the study of civic

literacies, students can locate and better respond to arguments they see in their daily lives. As such, articulations of our identities and values work to inform the kind of actions we take, which aligns with the ways uptake encourages us to think through how our dispositions inform and shape our activity. Additionally, our actions are informed by the kinds of information we find, read, and process.

This focus on how civic literacies function not as a state or skill, but as a practice, aligns with the goals of this project. However, my definition of action-focused literacies differs from an activist literacy because activism implies that the unstated goal of such literacies is to enact them for specific collectivist and social justice purposes. While I certainly see this as a worthy goal, I argue that the process of finding out about various social issues is also an action in itself, even if someone does not appear to be engaging in activism as it is understood popularly. Indeed, the word "activist" is a label that can have specific connotations for some students that they may not be ready to claim for themselves, whether they do later on in life or not. Indeed, looking at my own learning experiences, the act of learning that there were others with life experiences different than mine began a years-long journey of discovering what causes were important to me, and how I could intervene in them. For many students I have encountered, they are just beginning this journey. For students who at the beginning of a semester could not name a single community they belonged to, articulating the impact they have on others around them is a powerful action in itself, even if I would not name it as "activism."

So, to begin conceptualizing what action-focused literacies look like in this project, I consider the ways that action differs from activism. Just as the ways tools for finding sources are evolving, the existing modes and norms of civic participation are changing rapidly as well, as digital community spaces merge with grassroots movements gaining public attention. However,

despite increasing public attention paid to ongoing work towards racial justice and class struggle, and against US imperialism–and despite a wealth of widely available information on these topics–holding public attention on any one issue has become more difficult than ever. Considering action-focused literacies helps students to be attuned to the ways that power is distributed within communities, how decisions are made, and decide betweens methods to proceed on these and other issues that concern them.

An example to help walk through the process of mapping civic issues that I have taught is through stakeholder maps. In this activity, students are given a scenario- for example, test proctoring within online teaching. From there, students identify all the different groups affected by this issue, including subgroups. For example, under the label "students", we talk about how disabled students, or students without a quiet space to take tests, may be affected by this issue differently. From there, we identify which stakeholders hold power within the community in different ways, such as how administration has ultimate decision-making authority, but students hold power through numbers and tuition dollars. Then, in the texts we've used to ground this discussion, we analyze the different methods students enacted to intervene, such as petitions, speeches at board meetings, social media, and more. In this example, students engage in a variety of practices, including identifying how a power structure works in a community they are a part of, finding the different methods of participation that exist to push for change in that sphere, which are all critical actions in themselves for building action-focused literacies.

Action-focused literacies also build from identity literacies and information literacies in ways that can also benefit from uptake and strategic reading frameworks. In order to understand power structures, we must be able to articulate the ways that identity changes how different groups are affected by policies, which in turn includes talking about how structural injustices

underpin all of these ecosystems. Then, in order to find out more about the communities and the appropriate methods of response, we must choose between different information-seeking strategies. As such, action-focused literacies allow us to use the skills from the other two categories to practice making decisions with the information they have gathered. Through an uptake-focused framework, students use the language of uptake to describe how and why they have made the choices they did in deciding on a course of action. Additionally, by strategically reading a variety of texts, they can then incorporate different sources into the productions they create, and see how different types of writing are constructed within communities they're researching.

To be clear, it is impossible for any one course, or indeed any one discipline, to effectively teach each component that could be part of civic literacies. I bring up these categories to illustrate how varied and complex "civic literacies" are. One problem, therefore, is the way that administrations take terms like "citizenship" and "civics" and add them to degree requirements and diversity requirements without explaining to instructors or students what the goals are within these courses. As such, when we are asked to teach courses that emphasize "civic literacy" or its related concepts, it is necessary for instructors to carefully consider and articulate what that means to them and to the course in question. Therefore, one of the goals of this project is to provide a set of frameworks that can inform a multitude of potential actions and practices enacted for different courses across different universities. Indeed, education is not individualist, but collective, and the literacies described in this project are intended to be scaffolded and shared.

In terms of composition and rhetoric studies, then, our role is twofold. First, we teach how communication lies at the center of the above literacies. We engage in communicative

actions when we articulate our identities, when we seek information, and when we choose actions to take based on new information. Second, our role is to help students develop communicative skills and harness resources for engaging in public discourse in a world where tools and strategies are changing faster than we can adapt our pedagogies to engage them. To accomplish these goals, for the remainder of this chapter, I look to two particular frameworks that underlie much of the work discussed in this section. First, I use the concept of uptake, a framework that works to understand how people create strategies based on both habitual action and disposition (Brown and Walker, 2024; Walker, Shapland, and Larsen, 2023; Walker, Lewis, and Gramer, 2023), to explore how metacognitive strategies can contribute to civic literacy learning. Second, I look to strategic reading as literate activity to describe how differences and deficits in reading instruction for the contemporary college educational landscape functions to inhibit students' ability to engage in civic literacy practices.

Utilizing Uptake for Forming Conscious Strategies

Because civic literacies, as demonstrated above, are so layered and complex, students need a framework that works to explicitly name both what they are actually doing when they are engaging in civic literacies within literate activity systems, and also how their previous experiences and dispositions have created learning habits over time. In other words, much of this work requires stating the unstated and articulating the implicit underpinnings of learning. The concept of uptake, as used in writing studies, encapsulates a broad variety of both strategies for learning and "systems of understanding" (Angert-Drowns, Hurley and Wilkinson, 2004, p. 29) that lead us to think about learning in specific ways. Uptake asks learners to consider how our dispositions and antecedent experiences impact our learning; it asks us to carefully trace our habits and activities, as opposed to reacting without considering our varied strategies as options;

and it asks us to articulate why and how we make the decisions we do when creating different kinds of texts. Therefore, the values and goals of uptake-based learning intersect with the goals I have laid out for civic literacies education within a literate activity framework.

As such, discussing the different definitions used when discussing uptake is a key first step in identifying its usefulness in writing intensive, but not always writing-only, classroom contexts. Uptake's enactments begin in linguistics, but have spread into writing and composition studies and span a variety of sub-disciplines. The definitional groups, as I have curated them, explain uptake's role in helping students to name and acknowledge their identities, experiences and knowledges, and to better understand how others in the class, doing similar work, will articulate and develop different understandings of the same material. Further, uptake activities can help people to forge new pathways for democratic citizenship together, by incorporating and adapting our learning histories, rather than being asked to abandon them.

Histories of Uptake

Before defining uptake in context, it is necessary to briefly outline the history of the term and its shift in use within its different disciplinary contexts. Anne Freadman, a structural linguist, described how the linguistic conception of uptake could be merged with genre theory. Within linguistics, uptake refers to the way that certain "speech-acts" exist, in that specific linguistic prompts lead to a subsequent action (1994). In explaining how Freadman's work was central to composition studies' incorporation of uptake into writing instruction, composition scholars Anis Bawarshi and Mary Reiff go on to describe how Freadman brings "uptake to genre theory, arguing that genres are defined in part by the uptakes they condition and secure within ceremonials: for example, how a call for papers gets taken up as proposals" (2012, p. 60). In other words, according to Freadman, genres call writers to respond in certain ways, determined

by what the genre calls for within a social context. Therefore, in writing studies, uptake is a concept often included in discussions of how different kinds of texts work as embodiments or articulations of our understandings, which inform the literate activity practices we engage in when making different kinds of texts.

In transferring the concept of uptake from linguistics into composition studies, literacy and rhetoric scholar Angela Rounsaville expresses how uptake, as Freadman describes it, can be used in rhetorical genre studies because of the ways it is attuned to how "writers can be encouraged to proactively sort through and make selections in and amongst a "long, ramified, intertextual memory" of prior genre knowledge" (2012, n.p.). In other words, Rounsaville is stating how uptake asks writers to examine their varied memories of tools, texts, and strategies and choose between them when approaching a new writing situation. These choices are often rooted in memory and prior knowledge, which is important because "being able to locate what about a new genre or new writing task connects with prior experience provides a starting point for understanding how prior knowledge is being used in a new situation" (Rounsaville, 2012, n.p.). Such a conception of uptake connects to identity literacies because it describes how uptake was brought into composition studies in part because of the way it was poised to encourage students to name the memories that influence their actions. Finally, Rounsaville identifies uptake as useful to composition studies because it "asks us to trace and track those memories within textual and generic systems that are grounded in the students' own writing logic." Such a conception also ties to the activity tracing component of uptake, which is critical to practicing information literacies and action-focused literacies.

Building off of Rounsaville and others, genre theory and composition pedagogy scholar Heather Bastian also discusses how uptake can be used as a pedagogical framework in writing

classrooms to help students break the habitual ways of knowing and making that inhibit transfer. Transfer, for my research, is related to uptake in that it describes how learners move concepts learned in one context into new situations (Medina, 2019; Rounsaville, 2012; Adler-Kessner et. al, 106; Wardle, 2016). While this is a simplistic conception of transfer, uptake work such as Bastian's and Rounsaville's ask us to consider the ways that uptake, by asking students to trace their dispositions and activities, facilitate transfer by making writing practices visible. Bastian describes uptake as "the ways in which the individual, as well as genre and context influence how writers take up texts and make use of their discursive resources" (2015, n.p.). As such, Bastian again points to prior knowledge as a concept that interrupts students' ability to meaningfully choose between writing strategies based on what they have done in the past. What Bastian adds to the conversation, then, is that she seeks both to explain how uptakes are invisible, and to describe how teachers can "disrupt" these habitual uptakes and make them visible. Bastian states that "while the students' uptakes in this study may have been influenced by the memory of uptake, they most likely were not aware of this influence" and that "we often perform them unconsciously and deeply hold them as attachments" (2015). As such, uptakes are connected to identity literacies because all habits of learning and writing are so ingrained that it is difficult to name them, and therefore also difficult to choose to break them.

We see from these scholars how the transition of uptake from linguistics to composition studies present a diverging understanding of the term. On one hand, uptake describes how students' prior knowledge and dispositions form their conception of how to write, informing the actions they take when presented with different writing situations. In other words, we could name students' conceptions of articulation and tracing their "uptakes." On the other hand, Bastian explains how uptake activities could be used in the classroom to directly counteract or

interfere with those conceptions by asking students to name and trace the writing activities they are engaged in. Or, we could say that students are "uptaking" different ideas. As such, we begin to see a "fork in the road" in how uptake is used in composition studies: at once as a noun that describes uptakes as writer's diverging understandings and enactments of texts, and as a verb that describes the practices and activities used to disrupt those understandings and enactments. Here, we see a similarity to how civic literacies have been described earlier in this chapter, as both knowledges and practices involved in describing learning.

Further bearing out the impact of the differing uses of uptake, in his article "Disambiguating Uptake," Dylan Dryer states that "in attempting to operationalize such insights, the broad framework now dominant in writing studies has overtaxed RGS's [rhetorical genre studies'] conceptual vocabulary for delineating specific interactions among forms, practices, identities, and social formations–any and all of which we seem, confusedly, to mean by the word uptake" (2016, p. 60). In other words, uptake has become a phrase within writing studies that refers to a multitude of interactions between people, texts, and social contexts, which constitute the set of understandings that inform how we participate in literate activity. In his article, Dryer distills the myriad ways that uptake has been used within writing studies, taking on a life of its own far beyond Freadman's use of the concept in a linguistics context.

Therefore, I see **uptake** not as a definitive concept, but rather as a word used to refer to a set of activities and dispositions that describe how writers interact with rhetorical genres and literate activity. In the rest of this section, then, I will attempt to describe uptake by using two sets of definitions or usages: those that describe uptake activities as a noun, or set of dispositions, and those that refer to uptake activities as a verb, or set of practices that individuals participate in. By separating definitions out in this way, I aim to describe how uptake as a framework

connects to how people think about their identities, and act on those identities, in conscious and unconscious ways.

Uptake and Articulating Identity Literacies

The first set of definitions I have curated frame uptake as a noun, or as a set of understandings which help students navigate the world around them. These definitions sometimes, but do not always use the term "uptake" explicitly. Instead, I drew from uptake research in writing studies, as well as transfer research, which is frequently discussed in conversation with the term uptake (Bastian, 2015; Dryer, 2016; Bawarshi, 2016). In short then, these definitions are my own understanding of uptake, collected from research on broader metacognitive writing research.

When understood as a noun, uptake is something that an individual uncovers about their own learning, identity and experiences. I see noun use definitions as useful insofar as they relate to identity literacies, in which people use strategies to articulate their histories and dispositions. Uptakes, when used in this sense, are things, with certain attributes. For instance, uptakes are *negotiated* and *contextual*, meaning that the usefulness of someone's set of knowledges changes based on the rhetorical situation (Adler-Kassner et.al, 2016; McManigell Grijalva, 2016; Blythe, 2016). Uptakes are *habitual*, which means they form over time and become cemented as they are used in new situations, whether consciously or unconsciously (Bawarshi, 2016). Uptakes are *affective*, as they relate to our emotions and ways we have been made to feel over time in new situations (Wardle and Mercer-Clement, 2016). Finally, they are *cultural*, which means they do not materialize wholly from the individual, but are influenced by and often become a part of, the norms set down by communities (Black, 2009). In short, then, these definitions use "uptakes" as something that people have or articulate (a noun usage), They are useful to my framework of

civic literacies because of what they allow people to do, which is articulate particular dispositions and habits they have towards learning, which correlates with identity literacies.

In terms of incorporating uptake into the civic literacies classroom, these definitions are important because they show us how, in order to teach public discourse, participants need to understand and question their perceptions of the world and how those perceptions came to be. In terms of public discourse, "the externalization of those understandings in symbiotic form makes them available for feedback in self-reflection and revision in review of a record of the evolution of ideas and understanding and in documentation for public discourse" (Angert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson, 2016, p. 29). In other words, until we make the unconscious conscious and articulate our understandings, as well as how they compare to others, we cannot begin to turn these thoughts into action. However, such an understanding of uptake has the potential to stop at the individual, which is dangerous because without an understanding of how our uptakes interact with others, we make assumptions, which we act on, without regarding how those actions affect others. To put it another way, understanding our uptakes is imperative, but it is also not enough. We also need to be able to see how our individual uptakes have consequences for other people, because they influence our conscious and unconscious actions and beliefs.

Uptake and Tracing Information and Action-Focused Literacies

By contrast then, my second set of curated definitions treat uptake as a series of actions or strategies that learners employ to form their understanding of the world. Definitions of uptake that are attuned to action, therefore, allow me to make connections to my information and action-focused literacies in particular because of how they allow learners to articulate what they are doing when they search for information, for instance, or why they are making decisions as they enter a new community. These skills can include learning how to externalize and articulate

uptakes to others, as well as to critically compare understandings (Adler-Kassner et. al, 2016; Buck, 2012); being aware of one's existing learning strategies and how those strategies are useful or not in new situations (Angert-Drowns, Hurley and Wilkinson, 2016; Haas et. al., 2011); and being aware of the tools one is accustomed to using and how they can or cannot be used in new situations (Hayes, Ferris and Whithaus, 2016). These articulations are critical because, "students are more effective learners when they possess a rich arsenal of learning strategies, awareness of their strategies, knowledge of the contexts in which the strategies will be effective and a willingness to apply their strategies" (Angert-Drowns, Hurley and Wilkinson, 2016, p. 32). In other words, this quote encapsulates the kinds of strategies a purposeful understanding and engagement with uptake helps teachers and students to see, particularly in civic literacies classrooms. More specifically, it describes how people use uptake strategies not only to describe affects and identities, but also as actions which enable them to engage in information-seeking and action-focused behaviors. Put another way, then, both a noun and verb understanding of uptake is necessary because they refer to different actions that we want students to take. One asks students to articulate their dispositions toward and histories with learning; the other asks them to look forward and trace the activities they engage in when they interact with texts and activity systems.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how students use prior knowledge to inform their writing practices. This prior knowledge is also connected to uptake activities, which often ask students to trace and name their prior knowledge and how it informs their writing practices. Antecedent knowledge is a concept used in the Illinois State University Writing Program, where my pedagogy stems from. It is defined by this program as, "the facts, information, and skills that we each bring with us into familiar and new-to-us writing situations. When we talk about

antecedent knowledge, we include our previous writing experiences with particular kinds of writing and prioritize articulating previous knowledge that we are often not required to describe or unpack explicitly" ("Our Terms- Uptake", 2023). While this definition is centered on writing practices, it is a combination of two broad concepts: prior knowledge and antecedent genres. Prior knowledge refers to how "students connect what they learn to what they already know, interpreting incoming information and even sensory perception, through the lens of their existing knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions" (Ambrose et. al, 2010). In other words, when we learn, our embodied knowledges and experiences influence what we take from new information, in complex ways. While I discuss prior knowledge in more depth in the next chapter, the ways we make connections between existing and new knowledge is an action that uptake-based activities work to trace.

A related concept used in rhetorical genre studies is antecedent genres. Rounsaville invokes RGS scholar Amy Devitt's work on transfer to describe antecedent genres as the foundational genres students use to model future writing. For example, Devitt proposes that, "if we ask students to write analytic essays in first-year composition, that genre will be available for them to draw from when they need to write a causal analysis in their history class, a report at work, or a letter to the editor" (2008, p. 204-205). In other words, students rely on the genres they have used in the past to give them ideas for how to write in new genres. As with prior knowledge, these genres can be beneficial or detrimental to students' learning, depending on how it is activated. So, in terms of uptake as a set of activities, teachers can have students trace and map how their experiences with different types of documents compare to each other, and influence the choices we make. For instance, when I have students complete activities using the genre of the "email", I often begin the conversation by having students compare emails to the

"text message" and "letter" genres. By engaging in practices which ask students to critically map their writing practices and compare them, they are displaying uptake work as a practice of comparison.

Our uptakes do not remain the same over time, however; they are revised across contexts and time as students gain new strategies and perspectives. In order to form connections between existing and new knowledge, then, students must be introduced to new learning strategies, which can include new tools, practices, and genres, to give opportunities to engage knowledge differently. Uptake, when used as a set of practices, provides a framework for forming these connections because uptake-based activities ask students to articulate their learning in a time-based fashion, where they articulate the knowledges that informed their approach to writing, trace the activities they engaged in during the writing process, and compare how their knowledge changed over a time frame. Uptake, as a practice that encourages comparison and revision, treats the tracing of antecedent knowledge as a learning practice that we engage in and can practice, which is different from a general acknowledgement of antecedent knowledge as a concept that nebulously affects learning.

Once students have been introduced to new strategies, they must gain awareness that they are using a strategy. To do this, another activity of uptake is tracing the practices we engage in while writing. Instead of defaulting to a resource through merely creating a new "rule" to default to, students must be able to pick between strategies and articulate why they are using it in a particular context. For example, a student who has recently learned about library databases must learn to choose when to use these databases, versus Google searches, versus social media research. It would not be effective for the student to simply create a new mental rule stating "all research must be done in library databases." To do so would be insufficient awareness of their

strategies, because it fails to take into account context, and also does not show a conscious decision to use their new strategy, or awareness of their decision-making at all.

Another uptake-based activity students must be taught is to negotiate between tools, based on the context they are making a decision within, and articulate those negotiations. For example, while a research report for class may indeed rely on sources from library databases, many contemporary civic debates may rely on different sources, such as analysis of students' own social media, news articles, and even their own experiences. For example, a strategy which leads a student to ignore popular texts in favor of scholarly databases would be an unhelpful uptake for an assignment which asks them to describe non-scholarly research habits. Therefore, awareness of strategies, and in turn how that awareness both broadens and limits our options for acting, in conjunction with knowledge of context, are critical aspects of uptake.

Articulating the dispositions that lead students to be willing to use the strategies they've identified is another activity incorporated into pedagogical uptake work. Within writing studies, such willingness is often referred to as the dispositional aspect of uptake. As such, students must not only have a variety of strategies, know they are using them, and use them in the appropriate context, but also be affectively disposed to do so. For example, a student who is predisposed to mistrust news sources may be dispositionally unwilling to engage with these sources in a civic literacies classroom. Without addressing the affective realm, no amount of practice with using new tools will convince the student that these sources are worth using, and thus, they will likely rely on familiar sources and tools to complete assignments.

While these are some of the most prevalent definitions of uptake that persist in composition studies, neither noun or verb approaches are sufficient for transfer to civic literacies on their own. Students cannot begin to foster strategies for moving forward without

acknowledging their existing strategies and their own affective and identity-laden predispositions to the topics discussed in public discourse. Further, merely acknowledging one's antecedent knowledge without developing strategies for working with it to facilitate new learning can lead to a barrier in learning and growth that is antithetical to fostering thoughtful civic participation.

In order to sufficiently address the need to update both the language and modes valued in civic literacies education, one avenue for teaching is asking students to explicitly investigate and name their own communication practices, in order to both question problematic norms they've been taught and use the existing and developing skills they have to participate fully in the spaces they have influence in. Uptake is a potentially useful framework for civic literacies outcomes because it provides language for students to both explicitly describe the experiences that shape their understandings of public life and question aspects of their knowledge that seems to inhibit them from communicating with others about complex issues. Ultimately, then, articulating uptakes allows students and teachers to name the unspoken and invisible parts of learning, including their identities and practices. By naming these factors explicitly, it gives learners more opportunities to purposefully choose between strategies, rather than defaulting to those they are used to.

Understanding Strategic Reading Practices as Literate Activity

While the framework of uptake helps give instructors and students a shared language to describe what they are doing when they interact with texts, it cannot completely fulfill the plethora of activities described within the categories of civic literacies described above. While articulating the strategies we use when information seeking is important, to be informed citizens we also must be able to comprehend texts, articulate how they coincide with our identities, and act on them. Therefore, a comprehensive strategy for navigating reading as a skillset is a

framework that works alongside uptake in civic literacy learning that I will discuss in the next section.

As I worked to compile the uptake activities I utilized in the classroom after data collection, I began to notice another activity that was central to the work we did in the classroom: reading. As with civic literacies, I saw reading as a set of practices, beyond decoding meaning from text. Whether students were examining their existing dispositions and knowledges, finding and evaluating sources, or creating pathways for future action, they were reading and interacting with a variety of texts, across disciplines, genres, and communities. And yet, in my own pedagogy, I found that I had more strategies for teaching students how to understand their own writing practices as complex than I did for teaching how to approach reading practices as similarly complex. And so, I found myself at a loss trying to find a conceptual framework that encompassed how reading practices informed civic literacies education.

Therefore, alongside uptake, another conceptual framework I have used is thinking of reading as a set of literate activity practices. While much of the work on uptake relies on understandings of writing pedagogy, related skills and literacies such as source-seeking behavior and resource use involve not only writing, but also reading texts rhetorically in a variety of genres. As such, in order to discuss incorporating civic literacies in the classroom, reading instruction strategies and research into how students read is also critical. Through my research, I have curated literature in reading research into a few main categories relevant to this project. Throughout this section, I describe the ways that education and literacy researchers explain reading at the university level, in ways that are both useful for understanding reading practices, and problematic in how they understand learning. Some of the challenges I consider include students' ability to incorporate their existing knowledge into new contexts, as well as their ability

to articulate the gaps in their existing knowledge (identity literacies); their understanding of the genres they are reading and how to place information within its historical and cultural context (information literacies); and their ability to decide between a variety of reading strategies based on the contexts they have identified (action-focused literacies). Additionally, I attend to how student uptakes about reading are not the only facet worth examining: Differences in student understandings of the role of reading practices in classrooms and how teachers conceptualize reading as a set of activities also contribute to the challenges in enacting civic literacies education principles.

Antecedent Knowledge

Research on reading is complex because it spans a variety of disciplines. I draw from research in rhetoric (Kalbfleisch), but also other areas such as linguistics (Schmitt), literacy studies, educational psychology (Cartwright et. al, Ritchey and List), learning disability studies (Zipoli) and literacy studies (Carillo; Coistek and Coiro). Because of the variety in the backgrounds of researchers on the role of reading, I want to first acknowledge that the methods and background knowledge of each of these research studies differs from my own background, and my own approach to research. While I go into more detail about my research methodologies in the next chapter, I introduce the research that follows on reading with both an acknowledgement of the difficulties of reading instruction, but some skepticism in how reading is framed in these materials as a singular practice, rather than a complex set of knowledges and practices.

First, the research I found on postsecondary reading habits rely on what assumptions teachers make about what knowledges students come into college already having. These include reading strategies, but also cultural and historical knowledge (Kalbfleisch, Schmitt and Zipoli,

2022). To connect this to a literate activity framework, in any classroom, both the instructor and each student has a varied educational history, of which reading practices are one element. Based on our prior knowledge, both educational psychology research (Ambrose et. al, 2010) and writing studies (Rounsaville; Devitt) acknowledge that we approach new situations by relying on our previous experiences to guide us on how to respond. So, as instructors, the way we understand both reading as a practice, and the topics we use readings to examine, informs the approach we use for reading practices. For instance, if an instructor holds the assumption that students "should have" learned about a particular historical event in high school, some students' will share that historical knowledge, while others will lack the knowledge and context the instructor is expecting. As such, from a literate activity standpoint, both instructor and students' differing histories shape the ecosystem of how reading is approached in the classroom, changing class activity.

Preconceptions about students' antecedent cultural knowledge plays a role in their reading comprehension as well. For example, in a study of university students across several institution types (community college, public university, and private university), students were assigned a typical news article, like the kind assigned in many first-year courses, on the US prison system. Of the students, "a full 40% of students could not identify the thesis of the essay. Further, within this group, 25% chose the thesis that was the exact opposite of what the author wrote" (Kalbfleisch, Schmitt, and Zepoli, 2021). From the way that this study was organized, using multiple choice frameworks, it seems to operate from an understanding of reading where instructors intend for all students to come to the same, "correct" answer or conclusion. Such a conception of learning contrasts with my framing of uptake above, which acknowledges learning as always complex and multidirectional. However, I include it here because it nonetheless

highlights a problem with how reading is conceptualized. While the researchers intended to show what they saw as deficiencies in student reading, I see instead a divergence in how researchers and instructors viewed the goals of reading, and how that activity was taken up by students. These assumptions about reading, for me, were partially rooted in my own educational experiences of how reading was framed in courses I experienced as a student and instructor.

What's more, the same study found that, "when students don't understand an essay, they will often substitute a general cultural narrative familiar to them for the specific point the essay makes, if it is a topic they have some cultural knowledge about" (2021). While the above section demonstrates the role of unexamined antecedent knowledge as shaping teacher and researcher assumptions, this quote shows how student's antecedent knowledge shapes how they interact with the texts they read. For this project in particular, I argue that since uptake as a framework asks us to critically examine our antecedent knowledge, it is useful to understanding reading practices because if students were to trace their understandings about texts and where they came from through various uptake-based activities, those discrepancies between the texts and their antecedent knowledge could be made visible. For teachers, then, when planning how to discuss topics of civic debate in the classroom, having students articulate the narratives they bring to the classroom– as well as articulating our own as instructors– is a first step that often goes unaddressed in the reading research I highlight throughout this chapter.

Reading Across Genres

In addition to understanding the role of antecedent knowledge in how teachers and students approach reading, another site of challenge in understanding the role of reading in classrooms is that reading includes a variety of knowledges and practices, including the ability to holistically read a text, the ability to understand what genre a text is in and its conventions, as

well as its purpose, understanding who the audience for the piece is (or was), and an understanding of the discipline the piece is located within. Because of these intersecting knowledges, understanding reading in conjunction with uptake can help teachers build activities which make the work of reading visible to students, by having them trace the actual practices they engage in when they read.

One example of a reading strategy that researchers have examined is what writing studies scholars Jamieson and Howard (2013) call "sentence mining" (p. 127). In their study of 174 papers from first year students at 16 universities, "83% of students' citations came from the first four pages of the source text" (p. 125). In their findings, the researchers acknowledge the limitations in their study, stating that "this finding does not prove that students are not reading the entire source (p. 128). They go on, however, to argue that quote mining is problematic source use because it fails to give readers adequate context for how the source arrived at its findings (p. 128). In terms of my project, I see how the findings highlight how quote mining is a reading strategy students use when engaging in the work of translating their reading into new research, and the pitfalls of such a strategy. However, I find their recommendations for teachers to be incomplete. While I agree that "walking students through texts and modeling for them the kind of engaged reading and rereading that we expect of them" (p. 130) is one potential reading instruction strategy for instructors to use, it seems to still rely on the idea that "the research paper" is the only, or best, site of source-based inquiry, and that it is uniquely suited for assessing student's skills with engaging with texts to build an argument, and that there is a singular correct method for doing so.[4] By contrast, my goal in looking at reading through this

[4] This is stated with acknowledgement that this is an 11 year old study, which was included because it nonetheless connects with how I saw reading strategies reflected in reading research. New research from the authors of this text details how their assumptions have changed, through doing research on metacognition: 2018 Study

project is to examine how having students trace the practices they engage in, and, by tracing the work students are doing as instructors in conversation with our own materials, we can engage with the complexity of reading for research– across genres and across purposes.

Reading for research strategies are further complicated by complex notions of audience in the texts we engage with for civic literacies purposes. The ENG 183 course was comprised of a variety of genres, and while some emerged from texts explicitly aimed at students, many were not. Instead, they focused on non-academic audiences of various kinds. Educational psychology researchers Kristin Richey and Alexandra List discuss how a significant mismatch in faculty and student expectations for reading is in how the two groups understand audience (Richey and List, 2021, p. 283). For example, Ritchey and List describe reading in college contexts as "varied", where students may be grappling with "expert-level texts" (p. 283) for the first time. By engaging in what they call "metacognitive monitoring" strategies, such as writing down the goals of a reading and the strategies they used when reading, the authors argue that students can more effectively choose strategies on a text-by-text basis (p. 285). While the authors do not explicitly include audience in their framing, I argue that having students name the audiences of a particular text also fits into a metacognitive understanding of reading practices, which fits with a literate activity research framework that sees factors like audience as complex and dynamic.

Here, then, we see a tie to uptake and reading working in tandem. In the same way that students need to be able to choose between writing and research strategies, developing a multitude of reading strategies is also critical to being able to enter into new communities successfully. The antecedent knowledge students bring to a new class, not only about writing and genre, but also about reading, and about cultural knowledges, affects the way they read texts in

new contexts; it affects the kinds of texts they find and how they read them; and thus, it either builds or limits the strategies they have to choose from when they act.

Faculty vs. Student Expectations

Finally, a framework of implementing strategic reading is not only for students. We as instructors also have assumptions that impact the way that students take up various texts and concepts in our classrooms. In addition to the above described point about reading practices being "varied", Ritchey and List (2021) also describe how a lack of transparency and understanding from students about the role of reading in the classroom also contributes to student's reading difficulties (p. 283). They write that students often struggle with the "autonomous" nature of college reading practices, where instructor assumptions about readings are perceived more often as unstated (p. 283). As a reading researcher, I had the opportunity to talk to students about their interactions with course readings in several English studies courses, and many stated uncertainty about what they are reading for, which led them to default to strategies such as reading to relate or using testing strategies. They also cite a lack of need to read the full assigned reading, when only a few passages will be discussed in class, or if they know the instructor will go through the readings in class (Carillo, 2023). These challenges relate to action-focused literacies and uptake because if students' antecedent experiences with reading in the classroom lead them to believe that the strategies outlined above will work for what instructors expect, they will default to that unless explicitly taught otherwise. To refer back to Bastian (2015), teachers must disrupt habitual patterns of thinking if we want different results.

Therefore, while many reading intervention strategies are approached from the student angle (Ritchey and List, 2021; Kalbfleisch, Schmitt, and Zepoli, 2021), there are also steps and approaches we can use as instructors to encourage the kinds of reading we want from students.

By examining our own uptakes about reading practices and instructors, defining what our reading values are, and comparing our assumptions and values to the documents we make for students, we can more clearly state what the role of reading in our classroom is. While much of my project explores how students respond to uptake-related writing activities, the project is also devoted to me looking back at my own materials and determining the mi between what I believed I was asking and what I actually wrote down for students. Uptake, at its core, asks us to speak the unspoken and crack open the assumptions we have made about school, about our disciplines, and about learning. Any intervention that assumes fault on the part of students without examining our own assumptions and strategies fails to capture the complexity within our classrooms.

Therefore, when we ask students to read and analyze a variety of texts, both that we have selected and that they have found, we are constantly encountering the three categories of literacies I describe earlier in this passage. Our students will read pieces that interact with their identities in uncomfortable ways (and their uptakes in turn may conflict with our own identities as teachers). We will need to introduce and scaffold reading strategies depending on the context of the piece and the course, and do so frequently throughout the semester. And, we will need to guide students in how to choose between these strategies, based on evolving contexts and rhetorical situations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, my goal has been to show how terms like civic literacy work to obfuscate the goals of instruction in a variety of courses, for both instructors and students. Indeed, then, the first step in approaching courses with civic literacies outcomes is naming which literacies we want students to practice in our courses. There are a multitude of literacies and practices that

work together to create what we mean when we say we want to help create better and more informed citizen-students. In this project, I argue that by attending to uptake, which allows us to explicitly name our identities, knowledges, and practices, and a strategic and literate activity focused approach to reading, we can begin to conceptualize and create practices that help us to teach identity literacies, information literacies and action-focused literacies.-

In the next chapter, I will describe the specific methodologies I used to study how uptake and reading as a literate activity were displayed in the ENG 183 course I taught. I begin by describing three methodologies (teacher-research, literate activity research, and learning research) that shaped the methods I built for examining materials from the course. Then, I describe the objects I collected, and the methods I used to analyze those documents. Ultimately, I explain one method of putting into practice the frameworks I described in this chapter.

CHAPTER III: LITERATE ACTIVITY RESEARCH AS METHOD FOR DIALECTICAL TEACHER RESEARCH

In the previous chapter, I described the complexities in defining what civic literacies are, and made connections to how I argue the frameworks of uptake and strategic reading can help make visible to students and teachers how these literacies operate in classroom spaces. In this chapter, I explain both the methodologies that informed how I approached the classroom research I used to study these frameworks, as well as the methods I used to observe how both teacher and student created materials interacted with these frameworks. I begin by discussing the role of teacher-research as methodology, and how I conceptualized my role as a teacher-researcher, specifically because I was looking at my own materials and class work. Then, I describe how I used literate activity research to inform how I approached my objects of analysis by attuning me to the complex ways the activity systems of the classroom influenced course materials. I conclude the methodology specific portion by discussing how learning research similarly informed my approach to my objects analysis by further describing how a complex understanding of how learning operates required a similarly complex methodology for analysis. In sum, then, I am using an approach to teacher-research that is informed by both literate activity and learning research to describe the role of uptake and strategic reading practices in civic literacies focused classrooms.

After explaining how these methodologies informed my approach to my objects of analysis, I then go on to explain the methods I used to collect, trace, and interpret materials from the course I taught. In particular, I describe the ways that I used document-based research, where I looked at both my own teacher-created course materials, as well as examples of student work, to form the basis of my research. I also describe throughout adjoining methods of both my

memories surrounding my original course goals and planning, combined with my current, research-informed narrative of what learning I observed in the documents that form my analysis. Ultimately, then, this chapter describes the work I did in constructing an approach to teacher research that is informed by both literate activity and learning research. This chapter serves as both an explanation of my work, and an example of how teachers can build similarly complex methodologies for examining their own work within classroom spaces.

Teacher Research

Defining teacher research is a difficult task, described as "a strongly contested idea" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p. 3). As Lankshear and Knobel, researchers in literacy education and new and digital literacies, explain, the disagreements on "the mainstream view that teacher research is inherently non-quantitative" and of "who teacher-researchers are" remains debated among those in the field (2004, p. 6). Early research on teacher-research, particularly within social sciences, stemmed from two generally agreed upon goals of teacher research, though even these goals have been disputed and contested by new literacies scholars (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Delamont, 1992; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). These two precepts are that teacher research generally seeks to cultivate teachers as sources of knowledge-making, particularly about their own classrooms, and to improve learning for students and teachers (2004, p. 7-9). To explain further, teacher research "must flow from the authentic questions, issues and concerns of teachers themselves", rather than coming from some kind of external or "top-down" structure (2004, p. 8). Therefore, a teacher research project should position teachers as knowledgeable about their own professions and classrooms, and it affirms, as I will explain further in this chapter, that the work teachers do in the classroom is already a source of knowledge worth investigating. Second, teacher research seeks to improve outcomes

for students and teachers in some kind of demonstrable way. These effects can be specific to a teacher realizing how to realign their learning outcomes after discovering what practices led to students not learning certain concepts, as well as broad and aim at suggesting interventions to be adapted more widely in teaching communities (2004, p. 5). For my project, a teacher-research approach to studying uptake helped me to identify misalignments between how I viewed the activities of the classroom and how students understood and articulated their own understandings of class activities. My uptake-centric methodology of approaching class materials helped me to trace and map what was occurring within these misalignments and describe them.

As I further researched different approaches to teacher research, I was drawn to Ann Berthoff's framework of research, or what she calls "re-search" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p. 13). According to Berthoff, teachers "draw on their already existing and rich funds of teaching experience and write these into knowledge" (2004, p.13). In my own project, my entire approach has been based in using the work I was already doing in the classroom as a site of inquiry. When framing my research questions for the data I collected, I wanted to find answers to a few key questions:

1) What was I asking students to do using uptake[5] in the course, and how did that compare with what I believed I was asking?
2) How were students taking up or translating the activities for the course into their writing?
3) How did the differing activity systems inform reading in ways that facilitated learning, in expected or unexpected ways?

To answer these questions, I had to examine how theory "gave shape" to my teaching and research practices. Berthoff describes teacher research as the ways we consciously reflect on and

[5] Refer to my definitions of uptake in ch. 1, including noun and verb usages

re-examine the purpose of our teaching, our interpretation of our teaching, and then "interpreting our interpretations" (2004, p.15). As such, most of my analytical practices when looking at my objects of analysis were in essence documenting my own uptake of my teaching, using various methods for tracing teacher uptake at different stages. First, I drew from memories of how I initially organized the course, based on records I have of my own planning. Second, I use narrative work of how my research and research-informed practices influence how I understand the course now. Finally, I use document-based research of my own teacher created materials, and student created materials to observe the work of the course. Through these three methods of analysis, I used a research informed approach to uptake for a particular kind of comparison, where I observed how uptake is a snapshot of a particular moment in time, and that as our understandings shift with time, and new information, we can better understand what was happening in the classroom at a particular moment in time. In short, what a framework of uptake adds to teacher research is a way of understanding how temporal and embodied forces influence learning in ways that are difficult to see in the moment of teaching itself.

Literate Activity Research

Because my approach to teacher research is rooted in articulating my own teacher uptake, I also know that my antecedent knowledge in teaching, and how I have grown to frame my pedagogy matters in how the teaching practices I analyze came to be, as well as how I process them. My teaching background is primarily in a sociocultural model of teaching, where teachers and students are asked to engage in writing research practices including rhetorical genre research, uptake activities, activity theory research, multimodal writing, and emphasis on language and cultural differences in writing (ISU Writing, 2023). Therefore, the influence of literate activity research on my project is twofold. First, literate activity principles shaped the

actual objects of analysis I drew from in this study, because a sociocultural and genre studies approach to teaching writing leads to different kinds of writing assignments than another theory of writing pedagogy might. Second, a literate activity approach to research shaped the way I looked at these objects of analysis. In particular, components of literate activity research include mapping of complex activity systems, tracing of writing practices, and looking for complex articulations of how practices and dispositions– in other words, uptake– influence how we see and describe learning.

While literate activity, which I describe in more depth below, has a more direct influence on the methods I used to construct this project, I want to briefly touch on the ways rhetorical genre studies[6] informed my research. Because I took a genre studies approach to teaching civic literacies, the kinds of assignments students created revolved around both the analysis and creation of a variety of texts, including textbook chapters, popular news articles, documentaries, podcasts, YouTube videos, journals, film reviews, and others. As such, both the texts discussed in my objects of analysis, as well as the objects themselves, are direct results of a genre studies approach to teaching. For my research methods, then, these genres mediated the ways I conceptualized writing, reading, and researching as practices used in describing civic literacies.

Beyond the objects I studied, a sociocultural approach to literate activity also affected my approach to analysis, by attuning me to different ways of tracing learning in the documents I looked at. For example, some of the elements students traced in uptake activities included the tools they use and how those tools affect their composing process, the multiple audiences they will write for, and multiple ways texts will be understood and used by those audiences, the activities they engage in when writing, and how their environment affects their writing

[6] For a more thorough definition of rhetorical genre studies, see the introduction

processes. For civic literacies classrooms, an approach that focuses on tracing the actions students take when researching, their dispositions and positionality within different communities, and the complex ways that audience works to influence writing provided a lens for understanding how civic literacies operate, and in influencing what kind of practices I was able to trace. Without valuing these practices, their uptake, and by extension these literacies, would not be visible in the same way.

This socio-cultural approach is grounded in the collaborative webtext, "Re-situating and Re-mediating the Canons," (Prior et. al, 2007) where a group of writing studies scholars worked to problematize the reliance on the classical canons of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery) as the basis for understanding the production of meaning through text. They argue that this model excludes important factors of writing, such as a dynamic understanding of how texts are produced and used, and flattens writing practices by denying the complexity of people's real life writing practice. To replace these canons, the authors propose an approach to rhetoric based in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), where "activity is situated in concrete interactions that are simultaneously improvised locally and mediated by historically-provided tools and practices, which range from machines, made-objects, semiotic means (e.g., languages, genres, iconographies), and institutions to structured environments, domesticated animals and plants, and, indeed, people themselves" (Prior et. al, 2007, p.17). In other words, a socio-cultural approach to teaching writing argues that writing practices are complex and made up of myriad factors, including tool use, dynamic audiences, situated practices, environments, and means of distribution.

The different facets of sociocultural approach to literate activity research influenced my work because while I did not use the language of CHAT directly in the materials that became my

objects of analysis, its factors nonetheless shaped the kinds of assignments and activities I collected, and how I saw civic literacies as a complex web of people, tools, and texts, which are mediated by practices and dispositions. Additionally, the methods I used to look at my objects of analysis– including comparing documents temporally, tracing for specific articulations of activity and identity, and mapping divergences within and across assignments and units– evolved from a sociocultural approach to literate activity in teaching and learning. Though these ideas have their roots in writing studies, I bring them to bear in understanding civic literacies, because the practices I describe in the previous chapter, which make up civic literacies, are similarly complex, and the acts of tracing and mapping how learning occurs in civic literacies classrooms can help teachers understand how to approach complex subjects in a similarly complex way.

Learning Research as Methodology

In addition to the approaches described above, my approach to research was similarly informed by principles of responsible and effective pedagogy, and specifically, how research on what learning looks like shaped how I understood student work as exemplifying learning. Since uptake is concerned with articulations of both dispositions toward learning, and practices that demonstrate it, an understanding of the factors that shape these articulations shaped the way I looked at my objects of analysis. First, it shaped how I looked at my own materials, because part of my teacher uptake for this project is being able to articulate both how I saw my goals in creating certain assignments at the time I made them, as well as how my research has changed how I view what the goals of these assignments actually were, even if they were not explicit or conscious to me at the time. Second, these teaching principles shaped how I looked at student-created materials because they reminded me that the ways we explain our uptake are always

complex, particularly for civic literacies, and so, there were a number of factors potentially influencing their uptake, even if, as with my own uptake, they were unconscious to the student.

For these principles, I largely draw from the work of educational psychology and anthropology experts Susan Ambrose, Michael Bridges, Marsha Lovett, Michele DiPietro and Marie Norman, in their book *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (2010). Their examinations of the factors that impact learning stretches across fields, including examples from writing studies, biological sciences, history, and more, to show what educational research indicates about learning. I chose this text first because the principles described intersect with the previously explained methodology of literate activity research, and second because civic literacies spans many intersecting disciplines, I wanted to draw from principles that spanned these disciplines, because while literate activity research is useful for many disciplines, it emerged from writing studies, whereas these principles provided a new perspective on learning.

Prior Knowledge

The first principle that ties to my own teaching of civic literacies is that "students' prior knowledge can help or hinder learning" (Ambrose et. al, 2010, p. 4). While I refer to prior knowledge as antecedent knowledge, for the reasons outlined in the previous chapter, the general idea is the same– that students bring their experiences and knowledges from the past into the classroom. Ambrose et. al outline three kinds of prior knowledge that work in the classroom: "accurate but insufficient" knowledge, "inappropriate knowledge", and "inaccurate knowledge" (2010, p. 18-27). They also state that students will often not be able to summon their prior knowledge immediately–instead, it needs to be "activated" by instructors (2010, p. 15-18). In looking at my objects of analysis, I saw prior knowledge as intersecting with uptake, in that it is

concerned with the articulation of how our histories shape both our dispositions toward different activities, and the habitual practices we engage in within different systems. So, understanding the ways that prior knowledge is exhibited in different work helped me to identify instances where my own or students prior knowledge had effects in the work I was analyzing.

Using their categories, "accurate but insufficient" prior knowledge refers to the ways that students often "know facts and concepts but do not know how or when to apply them" (Ambrose et. al, 2010, p. 19). So, in terms of civic literacies, I specifically saw this concept coming into play with information literacies. Students often knew the basics of credibility– for instance, they could easily explain "rules" that they had been taught about credibility, which I have discussed in the previous chapter. However, in the places where they were asked to trace the research practices they used throughout various projects, I observed them see how to make the active choice of when and how to use different information-seeking strategies.

Another kind of prior knowledge that I saw operating in my objects of analysis was "Inappropriate" prior knowledge. This is when people attempt to take knowledge from one domain and utilize it in a new context where that knowledge is not as applicable or the most effective. For example, educational psychology researchers directly discuss English composition, and how students will often "think of writing as a one-size-fits-all skill" and therefore misunderstand the differences between genres of writing across different disciplines and assignments (Ambrose et. al, 2010, p. 21). In terms of my project, I observed instances where students would take concepts that work in one community and attempt to apply it regardless of the rhetorical situation. For example, when talking about language differences among communities, students will often rely on the cultural narratives they have grown up hearing, even if those narratives perpetuate harm to themselves and others. For instance, I teach an article on

the use of Spanglish as a rhetorical choice, and students often struggle with the article because of how it challenges their antecedent knowledge about "standard English." Particularly for students who speak marginalized forms of English, they come into the course believing that their way of writing and speaking is wrong because they have been so heavily corrected and punished for their language use. So, when researching the work of civic literacies in the objects I analyzed, understanding inappropriate prior knowledge helped me understand the complex ways that prior knowledge operationalizes beliefs, even unintentionally, and how uptake can make those unconscious beliefs more visible.

Finally, "inaccurate" prior knowledge is in some ways the easiest to break down. This type of prior knowledge is information that is either just factually wrong, or based in common misconceptions. An example from my analysis is that when we discuss Indigenous issues on campus, students often come to class with the misconception that there are no Indigenous students at our university, or even in the state at all. The erasure of Indigenous communities highlights a key difficulty in researching the role of prior knowledge in civic literacies, which is that while prior knowledge, according to Ambrose et. al, has a pervasive influence on our beliefs and practices, it often operates unconsciously. However, in future chapters, I describe the places in my objects of analysis where making visible the beliefs students held about the different civic issues we discussed helped them to confront them, which in the case of harmful beliefs, is often the first step in changing them.

Understanding prior knowledge influenced my research in two ways. First, for students, it showed me that the practice of naming our beliefs is a practice that is important for civic literacies because of the ways it helps us to make decisions on how to act, rather than acting on instinct. Uptake as a framework is useful for engaging in the work of naming our knowledges

because of how it encourages making unconscious habits and dispositions visible. Second, for me as a teacher-researcher though, I was also able to see how my own prior knowledge appeared in the teacher-created materials I observed. Many of the misalignments I observed between my expectations and student work occurred because of assumptions I made based on my prior knowledge. As such, the methodology I describe here is useful for teacher-researchers because it helps us to directly compare and observe the influences of our own preconceptions, and asks us to be intentional about confronting our own assumptions and misalignments in how we see our own teaching practices and materials.

Organizational Structures of Information

The second principle of teaching I draw from is the idea that how we organize information has an effect on what students take up from the class (Ambrose et.al, 2010, p. 44). Another way of putting this principle into practice is through how teachers scaffold information within a unit or a course (or even a week or single class period). For example, if information is presented chronologically (as is typical in many survey courses), students will often internalize that understanding the linear progression of information is important. Therefore, if the instructor's goal is not to explain progression, but instead to highlight how certain features of works are present over time, students will likely have difficulty isolating features, because their knowledge organization prioritizes chronology.

In my research, I saw course organization playing a role in how I conceptualized, and subsequently made changes to, the different activity systems of the units of the class. For example, in the next chapter, I describe the ways that I observed misalignments between how I conceptualized the goal of an activity that I used to teach about the complexities of **discourse communities** in the first unit. From looking at my materials in conversation with my notes and

memory, I realized that while I saw the activity as a means of observing whether students were progressing in a larger writing project in a way that would meet the requirements, students saw it as the first opportunity to practice the specific practice of mapping their communities. While I go into more detail about this misalignment in the next chapter, I mention it here because it illustrates how the research methods I describe in this chapter helped me to name and articulate how I organized the course, and how that organization had expected and unexpected effects on student's learning, as seen in the materials I analyzed.

Student Motivation

A third principle that informed my research is how student motivation shapes student learning. When discussing motivation in the classroom, two factors are at play: "the subjective value of a goal" and the "expectations for successful attainment of that goal" (Ambrose et. al, 2010, p. 69). In other words, students need to see the work of the classroom as relevant to their educational, personal, and professional goals, as well as see how different assignments help them achieve those goals. Additionally, they need to be able to feel as though those goals are achievable. Thus, work that is either too difficult or too easy is less likely to lead to motivation.

These factors tie into uptake as a framework for making student learning visible, because what I observed in my research is that accurately identifying and naming our motivations, as both students and teachers, is complex and multifaceted. First, asking students to articulate their uptakes can lead them to articulate their own goals. For example, when students in the class are asked to answer the question "how can you see this course concept being used outside of this class?", they often have trouble articulating what their educational goals are beyond passing the class and getting their degree. Such difficulties in goal articulation ties motivation to uptake, because without personal, educational, or social goals separate from course completion, there is

little motivation to examine one's uptake. If, for instance, a student is passing the class based on implementing their antecedent knowledge, there is little reason to examine it at all. Difficulties arise when students face situations where their antecedent knowledge is challenged, without strategies to adapt to new information. In these scenarios, students without other goals may become demotivated from completing work at all. Second, as a teacher-researcher looking at my own materials, I found that the goals I articulated for units and assignments, even in my own planning materials, did not always align with what I made explicit to students. In this way, my methods for teacher-research caused me to analyze my own motivations, and see that they were more complex than I initially observed in the moment of teaching.

In this way, uptake also asks us to attend to the affective motivations of students and teachers. For example, instructors and students often link motivation to the feeling of boredom, without fully examining what these emotions reveal. For instance, in my classes, readings are both foundational to the course, and a struggle for students. When asked what difficulties they have with the readings, many students state that the readings are "boring", "too long", or that they do not have enough time to read them. While the last factor especially is ripe for further study, when it comes to the assertion that readings are too long, I often treat this comment as a rhetorical exercise. As a class, I ask us to explain what makes the reading feel long–is it extraneous detail? Text without visual aids? An overabundance of terms without breaking them up or fully explaining them? By examining the reasons behind their reading motivation struggles, we are usually able to find something deeper than boredom, related to their understanding of the text. Particularly for students who see themselves as poor readers, breaking down reading struggles in this way can help with understanding that they are not expected to understand the reading immediately, and that class time can be used to help untangle the parts that confuse

them. Complicating such "all or nothing" understandings of reading comprehension can be a helpful factor in building student motivation as a component of their uptake.

For me as a teacher-researcher, I was able to do similar work in examining my own affective motivations. By directly looking at my materials, in conversation with planning notes and student work, a teacher-researcher methodology that uses uptake helped me to observe how the way I felt about teaching– how I felt about activities and readings, but also my own emotions about the issues being discussed, and my feelings about myself as a teacher– all appeared in the materials I created, whether they were visible to me at the time I wrote them. Another way that teacher motivation became apparent to me through my research was in how I *reacted* to these feelings. When there was a misalignment in how I understood an assignment and how students responded, I would often react by changing the activities of the course, either in the same section or in subsequent ones. By observing the recursive nature of uptake in student work through the research of this project, I grew to understand that these reactions were based in a linear understanding of learning that was operating unconsciously in my teaching. The research methods I employed in this project helped make these reactions visible to me.

Goal-Directed Teaching and Targeted Feedback

In addition to students developing their own learning goals, it is also important for me as a teacher-researcher to be able to understand how I articulated my goals for teaching, using a few different methods. First, I needed to observe what I made explicit to students, in the materials I created for them. Then, I needed to understand how I articulated the goals of the course, units, and assignments to myself, through my memory and planning materials. Finally, I needed to articulate how what students created interacted with the goals I saw at play in the work of the course, whether what they learned aligned with my initial goals or not. What I found in my

research is that the goals I described were often incomplete pictures of what I actually expected from student work, or more frequently, that the places where students exhibited learning was not always visible in the places or ways I expected.

The place in my research where the misalignments between my goals and what I made explicit to students was most visible in the feedback I wrote to students throughout their projects. To document the role of teacher feedback in student writing, composition scholar Elizabeth Wardle and student-researcher Nicole Mercer-Clement describe Mercer-Clement's experience in an art history seminar, where the student struggled with reconciling a working-class upbringing with the more metropolitan values and expectations in analyzing the works from the class. However, when the student described the feedback the instructor gave on the assignment, it mainly consisted of phrasing or formatting corrections, rather than engaging with the content of her analyses (Wardle & Mercer-Clement, 2016, p. 14). In this way, students respond to the feedback they are given. When teachers believe they are emphasizing values like critical thinking and analysis, but comment mostly on mechanical or structural features of writing instead, it is no surprise that students do not improve.

Additionally, when feedback is not aimed at future course work, but focused solely on the assignment at hand, "students have little opportunity to incorporate this feedback into further practice because each subsequent assignment is so different from the previous one" (Ambrose et. al, 2010, p. 123). When feedback does not connect to the goals communicated to the students, it becomes difficult for students to parse what they actually need to do to attain their learning goals. As such, when looking at my objects of analysis, I did not just look at my assignment sheets, but I also looked at my own feedback, to see how well it aligned with what I thought I was teaching. By comparing the student-created rubric with the feedback I actually gave, I was

able to see the places where my stated goals came into conflict with what I actually valued in student work, in ways that were not always visible to me in the moment of teaching.

Further complicating the concept of describing my goals, while I graded student work myself, the rubrics used in building assessment were co-created by me and the students of the course. The rubric creation days in the course were often some of the liveliest classroom days, where students not only came up with the criteria, but then had to decide together how each criteria should be weighted in relation to each other. Through these conversations, they not only determined (in conversation with me, and using the assignment sheets to ground the discussion) what they valued in the assignment, but also what they had to do to achieve it, and how pieces built off each other. In one assignment, there was a debate on whether organization and genre effectiveness were the same, and whether successfully replicating the conventions of a genre meant that the organization structure was appropriate. These conversations not only helped students understand what each individual piece of the assignment was, it forced me to articulate what I understood the assignment as, compare it to student uptakes, and then have clear expectations to ground my feedback on. This kind of reciprocal goal-making is a practice in making our uptakes explicit, and negotiating them as a rhetorical practice, which is made visible by appearing as an object in this study.

Student Self-Monitoring

Finally, another relevant principle for my teacher-research was that students must be "self-directed learners" who can assess and adjust their approaches to assignments according to the task at hand (Ambrose et. al, 2010, p. 191). In other words, as I stated in the previous chapter, students need to be able to choose between strategies for learning based on the assignment, rather than relying solely on what has worked in the past. However, as the authors state, "these

metacognitive skills tend to fall outside the content area of most courses, and consequently they are often neglected in instruction" (2010, p. 123). As I explained when describing the role of student and teacher motivation above, the ability to externalize our goals and then connect those goals and motivations to particular actions is extremely complex, and even as a teacher who prioritized the role of uptake in the classroom, my work as a teacher-researcher made visible the ways that the articulation of how we learn, and by extension the ability to connect different activities and texts directly to that learning, is not linear.

While my course was designed with the goal of including uptake-based activities in order to help students understand how their dispositions and practices influenced their learning, and to ultimately help them turn those understandings into conscious decision-making skills, my research showed me that understanding uptake means understanding that learning is always complex, and always divergent(Walker, Shapland, and Gramer, 2023). By creating a methodology for teacher-research rooted in the principles of learning and teaching described thus far, I found that incorporating principles of uptake were useful not to eliminate divergence, but to incorporate it as a given of learning. In order to self-monitor our learning, as teachers or students, uptake-based activities provide a way to make divergence visible, and embrace it.

Based on these methodologies of teacher-research, literate activity research– specifically, uptake as literate activity– and principles of learning research, I used methods of document-based research, memory of how I conceptualized the class, and narrative work of how I see the course now, to research both teacher and student work from the course. In the next section, I will describe these methods as they appeared in my research.

Methods of Collection: Document-Based Research

Reasons for Using Document-Based Research

Before describing the course and documents I collected, it is necessary to define document-based research, and explain why it was the best method for my project. Generally, document-based research occurs when "the data to be collected, organized and analysed in order to address a research question, and to be used as evidence for ideas and positions the researcher will argue for already exists within available documents" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p.54). This project consisted of two kinds of objects of analysis– first, teacher-created materials that existed before the course was taught, and student-created materials elicited at the end of the course. I chose these objects because they provided evidence of moments of learning, and the clearest view of what was tangibly produced for the class, instead of relying only on my memories of what my goals were. If uptake is partially defined as a snapshot of someone's learning within a particular moment, then the best way to capture that moment was by analyzing the work that came directly out of that instance. Interviews could obscure that meaning, because as we get further away from something, our memories change and shift how we have constructed that event, based on new experiences. Just as our antecedent knowledge is an ever growing and changing schema, the ways we conceptualize what we learned will necessarily be different once the class is completed, instead of when we are being asked to do particular tasks within a bounded timespan. Thus, particularly with student samples, I wanted to stick as closely to what they articulated on the page as possible, rather than extrapolating based on memories of the course.

For my own documents, however, the process of document research is more complex, because I as the researcher have constructed narratives surrounding my own teaching, and my

memories of the various versions of the course I have taught. Therefore, relying solely on field notes of my own observations of my teaching would not be right for this study because it allows me to rely too much on what I *intended* to do in the classroom, rather than what was actually on the documents I gave to students. I used a document-based approach because having tangible records to compare to both made visible what was actually being described to students, while also giving me something to compare my memories to. These documents acted as a trigger for my own uptake. I was able to consider what I *thought* I was asking, with what I materially put on the page for students to act upon.

For student artifacts, then, using the actual materials they completed for the class allowed me to similarly connect what they said to the actual stated goals on the assignment sheet, rather than the version of the text I envisioned in my mind. The ways I think about my assignments as a researcher are necessarily different from how I think about them as a teacher. As a teacher, I am negotiating factors such as how to leave feedback, how to quantify their performance in accordance with different evaluative criteria, and how to connect to that particular student with the goal of moving toward future units. As a teacher-researcher, however, I am looking at these documents with the goal of connecting what they wrote to what I asked them to do with my teaching materials, in conjunction with specific criteria based on the civic literacies I discuss in the previous chapter. Therefore, a document based approach worked for this project because it allowed me to keep my notes bounded to a particular moment of uptake, where I can see what they took from those materials and classes. If I used interviews, for instance, memory and time would naturally shift the responses I received as we start to construct narratives of learning after the fact. The documents were the best way to isolate their thinking within the moment of learning and uptake with as much accuracy as possible.

When deciding how to collect work from students, I wanted to give students control over how their materials were used for research. I did not want them to feel influenced in the work they did throughout the course, so I waited to tell them about the study until the last two weeks of the course. From that point, when constructing the consent form for the study, I allowed them several options for their participation. First, they could opt out from including their materials in the study entirely if they wished. Second, though, they could also choose to include their materials, but decide which pieces they wanted used or not used. To do this, I listed all of the assignments I would be collecting, and allowed them to check which assignments they would allow me to use in my study. I chose to give them options for what to include instead of needing to decide using an "all or nothing" mindset because I wanted to acknowledge how there may have been particular pieces the student did not feel confident with, or that they felt were too personal or revealing to be used in external research. By offering these options, I hoped to allow students the agency to make decisions about their own education, and to respect those decisions whatever they were.

Objects of Analysis

The data for my analysis in the next two chapters consists of my own course materials, as well as student-selected artifacts that were collected at the end of the semester. I taught sections of this course from 2021 through the fall of 2022. While the data of my own teaching materials is collected from across those semesters, in order to analyze the evolution of my thinking and teacher strategies, the student data I'm working with in these chapters is from the Fall 2022 semester.

I specifically taught the fall 2022 course through the framework I created as part of this project. Therefore, upon completion of the course, I provided students with a consent form,

asking for their permission to use artifacts completed during the course for this study. These artifacts included:

a) Discussion forum posts
b) Smaller assignments throughout the course
c) Unit projects
d) Unit journals
e) In class journals[7]

There were 17 students, ranging from freshmen to seniors. As such, the goals for the course were intended to be broad enough to engage students at different stages in their college work, and students with different areas of interest and courses of study. Of the 17 students, 10 agreed to their work being used in the study in some capacity.

I wanted to give students control over how their materials were used for research, and I didn't want them to be influenced by the idea that I would be "collecting" data on the course. Therefore, I waited to tell them about my proposed study until the last two weeks of the course, and I constructed the consent form to allow them several options for their participation. First, they could opt out from including their materials in the study entirely if they wished. Second, though, they could also choose to include their materials, but decide which pieces they wanted used or not used. To do this, I listed all of the assignments I would be collecting, and allowed them to check which assignments they would allow me to use in my study. I chose to give them options for what to include instead of needing to decide using an "all or nothing" mindset because I wanted to acknowledge how there may have been particular pieces the student did not

[7] See Appendix for assignment sheets

feel confident with, or that they felt were too personal or revealing to be used in external research. By offering these options, I hoped to allow students the agency to make decisions about their own education, and to respect those decisions whatever they were.

In collecting objects of analysis for my study, I thought about various factors. First, it was imperative for me to include my own materials in my research, instead of just basing my findings on students. The work of the classroom is deliberately co-constructed– students had a say in the rubrics for all major projects, for example, and frequently chose their own topics and artifacts for analysis. Therefore, to understand the classroom space, I needed to see as a researcher how my materials interacted and were in conversation with the work that students were doing in the classroom. What's more, I never want to imply in my research that my methods are infallible or beyond questioning. Thus, it was important for me to acknowledge in my findings not only the ways that my materials encouraged the kinds of literacies I describe as important, but also the places where I fell short of my teaching goals, which required me to tie these findings to documents from the course.

Finally, in choosing the artifacts that I would be looking at, I wanted to represent a variety of kinds of learning, and kinds of documentation. For instance, the projects we did represent a variety of modes, including visual and textual projects, but are also based on analysis of a variety of kinds of artifacts, including videos and audio projects. Therefore, I hoped to represent the multiple ways that learning occurs in the classroom, as well as the multiple modes of civic literacies learning. I also wanted to represent artifacts over an extended timespan. For the students of the specific section I studied, that means looking at their work holistically over the course of a semester. However, for my teaching materials, I went back and collected artifacts from multiple semesters where I taught the course, so I could fairly discuss how the course and

my teaching changed over time. By including a variety of projects over a large timespan, I am able to again look at my teaching holistically, rather than selecting only certain facets for optimal results.

Moving towards analysis then, I will end this section by describing the research practices I valued in my analysis. I wanted my reading of students' work in particular to be generous. I always assume in my analysis that students were completing the assignment to the best of their ability given the material circumstances they were in at the time. These circumstances can refer to both personal circumstances that caused them to not complete work fully, as well as take into account how our personal identities affected students' answers. For instance, if a student wrote that they didn't believe racism was a factor in a text we read, and that student expressed in the course that they had little experience with people of color, I wanted to comment on that answer without making moral judgements on the student. Even if my course goals were rooted in increasing awareness of social justice issues, I did not want to make evaluative statements about student learning simply because they had a reaction I did not anticipate. In other words, just because an uptake was divergent, or not what I expected, did not make it "wrong." It simply was what it was.[8] Therefore, I wanted my analysis to be descriptive, not evaluative in nature. I did not want to further narratives of learning as either "success stories" or "stories of deficit." Instead, I wanted to describe what I say as moments that revealed how students were documenting their learning using the framework of uptake, according to the criteria I laid out.

[8] As a note, exceptions to this principle would include hate speech, language that violated our classroom principles of respect and generosity towards others, and speech that violated the university's ethical norms. However, I did not experience any of these kinds of comments in the data submitted for the study.

Methods of Data Analysis

In transforming teacher and student documents into preliminary categories for analysis, then, I return to the research questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter, which were:

a. What was I asking students to do using uptake in the course, and how did that compare with what I believed I was asking?
b. How were students taking up or translating the activities for the course into their writing?
c. How did the readings for the course facilitate learning, in expected or unexpected ways?

In order to answer the first two questions, I developed five main concepts that are important to understanding how civic literacies are enacted in the documents I observed.[9] I created these concepts before I analyzed my objects of analysis, to articulate to myself what I valued as important practices for enacting civic literacies. While I will explain in later chapters how these concepts became more complex for me as a researcher, I want to describe them briefly here, as they informed my initial work in mapping the complex activities I saw in my objects of analysis.

Identity Construction

The first concept critical to making student uptake visible is identity construction. Often, conflict occurs when an idea or ideology somehow threatens a portion of someone's identity. Because of these complexities of identity, in order for learning to occur, people must first learn strategies for creating a mental environment that allows them to learn when new information seems to attack their fundamental ideas or identity. To expand on this idea, students typically come to the university setting with a diverse set of pre-existing knowledges and experiences that shape their worldview. More critically, these worldviews are often tied to student's identities,

[9] To learn more about the three literacies (identity literacies, information literacies and action-focused literacies), see the previous chapter, where I discuss them at length.

which, in the university years in particular, are still entwined with their home communities in many cases. Therefore, when students are presented with new information or ideologies that run counter to what they've been taught at home, it can impede the formation of new uptakes because the integration of new information threatens both their community bonds and their sense of self. In other words, if a new idea challenges the security of either the student's sense of self, or creates conflict with the communities the student values, they are likely to not integrate new pathways, because they stand to lose more from changing their thinking.

In looking at my objects of analysis, I was primarily interested in asking students to name the ways that their antecedent knowledge and embodied identities influenced their learning. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will discuss how the process of naming emerged as an important practice for encouraging identity literacies. What's more, beyond naming their own literacies and knowledges, this concept also extended to places where students were asked to name the values of communities they were not a part of, which will constitute another part of the upcoming conversation about identity construction's role in developing identity literacies.

Contradictory Uptakes

The second concept I developed concerned how student uptakes can contradict each other— especially when taking up new ideas. Since we are embroiled in multiple discourse communities at any given time, it is only natural that the values and goals of these communities may conflict. Therefore, once students have engaged in the work of describing their histories and naming what they see as their core communities and values, the next step is to introduce new communities and values and see how they interact with each other. Especially early on in the introduction of new ideas, it is natural for students to experience varying levels of resistance, uncertainty, and boundary testing in their examination of how their new and existing knowledges

intersect. Part of building a mental environment where students are primed for the introduction of new ideas is allowing for students to come to terms with the way their new and existing knowledges may contradict each other.

In the next chapter, I hope to show and discuss the role acknowledging divergent uptake has in civic literacies education. It is not sufficient to stop at naming what you've learned, or what your antecedent knowledge is- rather, we must unpack how that antecedent knowledge works to create or shut down future actions or dispositions. In other words, we can teach students as many new pathways and concepts as we want, but they will not transfer unless we also teach them strategies for sitting with them and allowing them into their schemas.

Constructing New Information Pathways

These new pathways interact with the third concept, which is how to learn (and be really aware of) new strategies for finding information, evaluating sources and narratives, tracing where information comes from, and what ideologies are behind it. In other words, as educators working towards civic literacy education, we must engage in practices that encourage new means of information seeking, including understanding how algorithms and alt right tactics work to create certain uptake pathways. New means of source evaluation are necessary to disrupt these pathways and encourage more helpful research habits.

In the next chapter, then, my analysis for this section was the most straightforward in the connection between my goals and student uptake. Despite its directness, however, it is illuminating because it allows me to see what theories and concepts had the most transfer for students. Therefore, I will discuss which concepts resonated with students, and how the practice of naming techniques and practices contributed to their overall transfer and uptake of information.

Material Impacts of Uptake

For the next two concepts, my focus shifted from identity and information literacies to action-focused literacies. While the first two categories rely on articulation and naming as practices, the action-focused literacies are more speculative, asking students to imagine what they can do with their articulations. Here, we start to see a shift between the noun and verb usages of uptake described in the previous chapter.

The fourth concept asks students to move from articulating their knowledge to understanding that one's actions and beliefs do not occur in a vacuum, but affect others in material ways. In short, understanding that uptakes have consequences is key to making uptake useful as a social concept. Examples could include the effects of how and whether we vote, where we get information, and whose voices we prioritize, as well as the intersectional nature of most public policy. For example, understanding that economic beliefs have social consequences, such as a student who supports the gutting of public welfare but resists discussing race's role in those beliefs.

In terms of action-focused literacies, then, the shift from passive participant to active agent is the first "half" of action-focused literacies because it primes students to start thinking about how they can do something about the issues they have identified as important to them throughout the course. In naming their own role in the power structures we have described, they admit they have an impact, which is an action itself, in addition to spurring future actions. In the next chapter, then, I will describe the connections students were able to make between the various conflicts we learned about in class and their own spheres of influence.

Reconciliation of Beliefs

The fifth and final concept is understanding the importance of reconciling past beliefs with new ones. To do this, students must think about not only how their understandings have evolved and been revised during the course, but where they started and what experiences or new knowledge made them re-think. Part of this is knowing that we've all engaged in beliefs that are unfair or damaging to others, and that we've all been misled, at times by sources that are intentionally or not, pushing particular ideologies. Therefore, as students begin to recognize where their beliefs come from and how they affect others, it's important to think about what actions and practices we can partake in to cement new, helpful uptakes. Since uptake is a habitual practice, we need to create new pathways and methods for reconciliation.

In the next chapter then, I will describe how this fifth feature is the culmination or coming full circle between identity and information literacies and action-focused literacies. I will talk about the different approaches students took to bridge their antecedent and new knowledge, as well as how they see themselves as agents of change in their communities, or at least as having more agency over their own worldviews. Rather than beliefs being something that happen to them, they describe parsing information as an active instead of passive process.

Course Organization

Finally, before I describe my research methods and findings in more detail during chapters four and five, I will briefly describe the context and outcomes of the ENG 183 course when I taught in the Fall of 2023. I include this brief description to help the reader place my findings and objects in the context they emerged from. Because I see teacher research as situated and contextual, understanding the parameters of the course informed how I viewed my objects of analysis.

The course is a general education course, at the 100-level. In the different semesters I have taught the course, I have had a range from 9 to 30 students enrolled in the course at a time. I mention all three sections because I drew activities from all sections that I taught. However, for the section that student samples emerged from, the class was taught in Fall of 2022 course. According to the Illinois State University course catalog, the description of this course is the "study of persuasion and rhetoric as bases for democratic citizenship and civic engagement." In interpreting these broad goals, I developed several learning outcomes, which were:

1. Understanding discourse communities affect identity, and in turn how our positionality within communities affects the ability to participate in discourse communities
2. Understanding how language is shaped by identity and vice versa
3. Understanding systemic injustices, including but not limited to racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and ableism, affect who is able to engage in certain language practices, as well as how language practices have disproportionate effects on different communities.
4. Understanding our own and other's language practices can help to affect change

These learning outcomes are aligned with many of the civic literacies and practices I describe in chapter two of this project. However, in my next two chapters, I will describe the ways that my articulation of these learning outcomes has been complexified and changed based on my research in this project.

Limitations and Data Analysis

As far as the limitations of my study, I acknowledge that I am limited to only one course, with a particular set of goals and parameters. As such, any generalizations I can make will be based on this limited set of data. Additionally, I am limited in that I am the one who created

these assignments, and so only have my own teaching to base any findings on. As such, I cannot necessarily speak to the overall generalizability of any claims. Finally, I am limited in what students choose to share, as well as the demographic limitations of the institution this course was taught in. As a predominantly white institution, many of my results will be based on academic standards of whiteness, as well as students' and my own experiences of whiteness. While there are many students in this study who are non-white, I nonetheless acknowledge the existence of systemic biases present in the institutional space, as well as in my own teaching, no matter how intentional I am in attempting to craft assignments that battle these prejudices.

Despite these limitations, this research study remains useful because learning is always situated in the context that surrounds it. As such, my findings are useful because they serve as an example of how teachers can examine the unique and particular circumstance of their classrooms. I argue that teacher-research cannot be generalizable, because learning is always situated and divergent. I can teach the same assignments I describe here a second time, and the results would be different. Instead of providing generalized answers to the questions I asked as a researcher, I instead offer a map into how teachers can use student and teacher work in conversation to learn about their classrooms.

In the next chapter, then, I will use the concepts discussed above to analyze both my own teaching materials and student productions, weaving together what I see as the interconnections between the course learning outcomes, my identification of the components of civic literacy teaching and learning, and the ways this information was taken up, both as I created materials, designed assignments, and assessed students work, and in the productions that students created and chose to share for my analysis.

Additionally, as my specific interest in approaches to reading have grown over the course of the project, I'm also including, in Chapter 4, an analysis that attempts to uncover my own approaches for assigning and encouraging the use of readings, and the ways that readings were variously taken up by the students, in connection with the components of civic literacy I've outlined. I will provide additional discussion of which readings were mentioned by students most often, and how they were discussed, in conjunction with the criteria discussed in this chapter and chapter 3.

CHAPTER IV: COMPLEX LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR DIVERGENT UPTAKE

In the previous chapter, I laid out five concepts I saw emerging as points of interest from my research, which I initially used for analyzing the materials from my study. In this chapter, I will begin by describing how this mapping actually unfolded, and how and why I ultimately moved away from my initial concepts as discrete units for analysis and toward a more holistic framework of tracing sites of divergent uptake in my objects of analysis. While I still believe the themes I identified in the previous chapter are integral to civic literacies learning, I found that thinking about the categories as discrete skills was antithetical to my project, where I see learning as complex, interconnected, and nuanced. In this beginning section, I will first describe how I used the concepts in the beginning of my analysis, the difficulties in using preconceived concepts, and the final framework I ultimately decided to use in my larger analysis. Then, I will describe four sites throughout the objects, from different temporal places in the course, where I saw divergence, in different ways– between my expectations and what students produced, between where concepts appeared and when they were introduced, and between the goals of assignments as I conceptualized them, and the skills students exhibited. Then, I will end the chapter by tracing one student's uptake as it unfolded throughout different points in the course to demonstrate how uptake was made visible to me in my research.

Initial Analysis

Initial Learning Concept	Criteria I used for analyzing teacher-created objects	Challenges I experienced when looking at objects	Criteria that I used for analyzing student-created objects
Identity construction	Places where my goal is for students to identify how they are involved in different issues/communities, or reflect on their own learning/dispositions	Naming for self, but then using to name values for others?	Perhaps different codes for "naming their identity and values that influence learning" and "naming what they learned"?
Contradictory Uptake	Generate contradictory uptakes and acknowledge contradictory uptakes (my goals of teaching)- for others and for themselves		Places where they diverged from what I thought
Material Impacts	Understanding your place in power relations and role of enactment	Is it just power? Or is this how they would use it?	
New pathways for information	Places where I encouraged students to use new lenses for gathering and analyzing sources	Antecedent or all source-seeking patterns?	
Reconciliation of ideas	Places where I asked students to connect antecedent knowledge and new knowledge.	Identity and antecedent knowledge are linked- how do I define the difference?	For students- this might be contradictory uptake?

(Table 1: Preliminary Criteria)

Above, Table 1 represents the initial map I used to define the concepts I was analyzing for myself, and how it evolved throughout my analysis process. The first column includes the five categories I identified in the last chapter. The second column describes how I decided to define what I was looking for in student work for each concept, while the final column is where I described if there was a difference in how I approached my own work versus student work.

The third column, then, included my notes as I was drawing connections between objects and the concepts I wanted to learn about. This column is the most interesting to me because it

was the first sign that the analysis system I had devised was not working in the way I intended, or yielding the results I wanted for the project. I found that while the categories I identified as important to civic literacies learning were clear in the abstract, actually applying them to my data felt far more arbitrary.

While the concepts I described in Table 1 were distinct in my creation of the course, when I applied them to actual student artifacts, I found myself limited by the structure because my approach led me to view each statement from a student artifact or text as discrete, instead of considering how my materials and student materials interacted over time. Further, even in applying my method to single artifacts not in interaction with each other, I could not distinguish between categories. For example, in defining *contradictory uptakes* and *reconciliation of ideas*, I often found that I was having trouble deciding what would fit in one category over the other. In the chart, I wrote that for contradictory uptake, my goal was to look for places where students held two ideas that seemingly conflicted as true simultaneously. However, as I mapped my findings, I could not decide what made this category distinct from a reconciliation of ideas. So, I revised my thinking to instead consider contradictory uptake as places where students' answers diverged from my expectations. And yet, this still diverged from my initial purpose in creating the concepts in the way I did. I felt torn between how I was articulating my defined goals within my own materials, but not being able to explain how student work diverged from those expectations within my current framework. Ultimately, then, while outlining the skills I believed necessary in a civic literacies course was important work when creating the class, they were not useful as a researcher using these categories as a heuristic for learning what students and I actually did in the classroom.

Beyond my own difficulties in articulating how the categories I identified were distinct in practice, I also found that the way I approached the data was actually antithetical to the kind of inquiry I was trying to do. As I began to break down my notes, the question I found myself asking of my data was "does this count as learning?" I viewed my concepts as "goals," and this outcome-driven language encouraged me to force my inquiry into a limited view of learning, where I was more concerned with whether or not students learned a certain concept, rather than to actually explore what happened in the course in a meaningful way. For example, if I viewed "Identity construction" as a goal of the course, when looking at student assignments, I only noted something under that criterion if I thought it demonstrated that they were saying something definitive about their identity. The problem with this strategy for analysis was that instead of my findings emerging from the data, I instead felt pressure to explain away student work that did not neatly fit into one of my pre-determined concepts, I found that I didn't know what to do with the answers that didn't fit a narrow view of what learning looked like, in ways that contradicted the point of this project. To make up for this, then, I found myself making assumptions about student work in an attempt to explain why these differences happened, rather than actually analyzing what work was being done.

Complicating the Role of Choice: The Discourse Community Analysis

Divergent Uptake as Framework

By working through this frustration, though, I developed a more fruitful framework to use in analyzing my data: Divergent uptake. I began to wonder how the places where my expectations did not align with student work were in fact proof of learning, rather than a symbol of my projects "failing." I began to ask the question: With concepts as slippery and complicated

and "civic literacy" and identity, what does learning look like, and how is that learning distributed across multiple assignments?

To examine this question, I wanted to analyze the factors that led to the differences in my expectations in concert with student work. To do this, I connected my experiences to the term **divergent uptake[10].** In terms of the class that formed this project, thinking about divergent uptake allowed me to see how students would come away learning different things from the course, even though they were all working with similar topics, using the same texts and activities. Using that idea, I approached this chapter by first looking at how my goals appeared in my physical materials that I used for teaching, and where the markers I was using for success did not actually show up in these documents. In terms of my data analysis, I began to look at my own materials and ask the question, "what did students do with this information that surprised me?", rather than only looking at what my intentions were in writing a certain assignment. For student materials, I was able to look at what strategies they used, or what they did find, rather than looking narrowly for so-called evidence of certain outcomes.

In approaching my research questions this way, I want to disrupt the t*eacher success story*, in which pedagogical impulses tell us to explain how students either performed in ways we expected and therefore succeeded, or did not say (or do) what we wanted and therefore failed. Instead, I want to be candid about the places where my internal expectations conflicted with what I actually said–and wrote–to students. Then, after explaining my own materials and goals, I present a few student examples which ask the question: in what ways did students' divergent uptake demonstrate civic literacies learning? Through these examples, I explain the ways that

[10] Divergent uptake refers to the ways "everyone's uptake is highly individuated, different from other people's uptake of the same idea, term, or practice" (Walker, Lewis and Gramer).

students' responses diverged from my own, or from my expectations, and yet still showed growth for the outcomes I developed, in hopes of developing a broader–and more accurate–view of what learning looks like in the civic literacy classroom.

The first way divergent uptake appeared in the course data was a disconnect between the literacies I expected students to have, and what they showed in their work. In the first unit assignment, I created an activity, which I will call the **Discourse Community Analysis,** that called for students to choose a community they considered important to them, and find an issue or disagreement that occurred in that community. From there, I asked them to identify three separate subgroups in this community, called stakeholders, and discuss how each subgroup had a unique stance on how the disagreement should be resolved. The goal of this assignment was to highlight for students (a) how they are a part of communities, and thus, that civic literacies principles have an effect on their lives and (b) how our viewpoints about various community issues are tied to our socially-constructed identities.

When I initially created the assignment, I believed that I was planning with divergent uptake in mind. I created the assignment with the assumption that students would have a variety of experiences and backgrounds, and so, I valued student choice in what topics they chose. I did not specify on the assignment sheet specific communities as examples, because I wanted students to define for themselves (using class concepts) what discourse communities they were a part of, and by extension, find value in the topics that mattered to them. However, while I accounted for **divergent experiences**, I learned that this is distinct from divergent uptake, or divergent learning. Contrary to my expectations, students struggled with the amount of choice in the assignment, and in being able to articulate what communities mattered to them. In this section, I

will examine the phrases in the Discourse Community Analysis assignment sheet that indicated divergence, as well as student work that deviated from my expectations.

Antecedent Knowledge and Teacher Expectations

In looking at the assignment sheet for the Discourse Community Analysis that I distributed to students, the first phrase I saw as notable for identity construction was that I wanted students to "identify an issue in a community you are a part of." When I wrote this, I saw it as tied to my goal of identity construction because I assumed that by identifying a community that one considers themselves a part of, students would feel some ownership over the outcomes within that community. In previous teaching experiences, I found that students who were anxious about finding a large-scale issue that interested them were more able to create projects if they started with a smaller community issue, where they had some influence. Based on this assumption, I built a course goal for ENG 183 on the core belief that if students saw that the issue or community they identified was materially tied to their lives, they would have more investment in the project, and see how civic literacies mattered to them.

However, looking at this phrase as isolated on an assignment sheet, I can see the assumption I made about students' civic literacies. Mainly, I assumed that students saw themselves as part of a community, or even multiple communities, which is a problem not unique to these students, this course, or indeed any one classroom. Throughout the course, students struggled with being able to name what communities they identified with, and with whether those communities "counted" for the assignment. Here, the phrase "counted" means that students were unsure whether the communities they identified for their projects aligned with my expectations for the project. Partially, the divergence I note here between my own expectations and student struggles stemmed from not only having to name a community, but also balance the

rhetorical situation of the assignment and how their chosen community fit into course expectations. By stating that the goal of the project was to identify communities, but not naming parameters for what I meant by "communities," I expected students to be able to articulate how their identities were socially constructed. This diverged from what students actually understood about identity and community, so this articulation was a skill that I took for granted. Partially, I did not give strict criteria because I wanted students to have to think about what "counts" as a discourse community for themselves. However, in this project, I found myself asking if this was a fair expectation of students, particularly because of the lack of social connection many of them expressed in the wake of returning to largely in-person learning after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of civic literacies learning, this example helps to describe a facet of uptake that I believe is helpful to account for in teaching, which is the ability to name the processes and concepts necessary to even begin working on a given project. So, in this instance, I assumed that students would be able to name communities relevant to this project, using the criteria we discussed in class. However, while students could name communities in the abstract, they had more difficulty naming them in relation to themselves for the project.

Other phrases from the Discourse Community Analysis assignment sheet that signaled divergent uptake in student work included, "consider your own stake and relation to the community", as well as "mention and consider which stakeholder you align with, why, and how this affects your position." In using this language, I wanted students to consider how their position in a community affected how they saw the issue because, from an identity construction standpoint, the communities we align ourselves with often reveal information about the values that we hold and where those values stem from. So, for example, during class discussion, we talk about online test proctoring, and what values or antecedent knowledge would lead someone to

advocate for or against that position. Someone who has had a bad experience with testing in the past may be more likely to advocate against it, for reasons of access or privacy. However, an instructor who has had prior experiences with students cheating on their tests may be led by their antecedent knowledge to prioritize proctoring software because they value academic integrity. So, by asking students to examine how their prior experiences in a community lead them to believe a certain way about an issue, I wanted to lead them to name how their thought processes and value systems came to be.

In terms of civic literacies learning, then, I would name this skill "tracing prior knowledge." Similar to "naming" above, one of the skills I was intending students to practice was the ability to track their prior experiences and explain how those experiences led them to the beliefs they hold. Some student examples of this skill include a student whose project was on AI art, and whether it should be allowed in art competitions. The student said that, "as an artist, and a "traditional artist" (someone who draws using hands-on tools like pencil and paint, as opposed to digital art), I feel like my place in this community leads me to seeing AI as something totally separate from art." I noted this phrase in their work because they directly explain how their experience with art, and the physical tools they note using to create art, ties to the process of creation as a fundamental part of making art. Without this prior experience, someone outside of that community may not value creative processes in the same way. Therefore, being able to name and trace the experiences that have shaped their view of an issue fulfilled this criteria.

However, the inverse of this criteria is the fact that it is more difficult to identify how experiences you ***have not had*** can also influence your view of an event, as is the case in unconscious bias. When I created the Discourse Community Analysis, I imagined that students would incorporate their own experiences, but also research outside viewpoints. However,

students often struggled with researching their communities. In one student sample, a student created a project discussing the need for new uniforms for a high school sports team. They cited reasons for this including the uniforms being in disrepair, lack of hygiene, and representing the school poorly. In my feedback on the student's draft, I asked "Presumably, the reason the school doesn't provide new uniforms every year is because of cost. Do students pay for the uniforms? If so, how might lower income students be affected differently?" By asking this question in my feedback, I was trying to push the student to think about how students with different experiences might have a different perspective, even though they are also included under the umbrella of "students." In using this example, I see how one of the problems with tracing prior experience as a skill in a civic literacies context is that being able to account for and trace experiences you ***have not had*** demands space for the expression of unexamined biases. To explain, articulating one's identity can help us understand how our antecedent experiences shape our approach to new environments, as I've discussed in previous chapters. However, without being able to see beyond those experiences, I left out structures for exploring how our antecedent experiences can limit our thinking as well. So, while I successfully made it clear that students were to trace their experiences, I did not find a satisfactory way to convey that our prior experiences teach us a lot, but they also can work to keep us from gaining knowledge outside of our immediate surroundings. I give a more detailed example of what tracing unfamiliar experiences can look like later in this chapter.

Therefore, based on reviewing my materials from the Discourse Community Analysis, I found that two key skills related to identity construction that went partially unexamined in my materials were (a) naming concepts in relation to the self and (b) tracing prior knowledge in connection to existing beliefs. In terms of a class with civic literacies outcomes, then, making

these goals explicit to students could help with student uptake by better delineating what "counts," and by not assuming students know that their experiences are valuable and limiting. Additionally, by asking students to trace their prior knowledge, we also have to account for the ways lack of experience is valuable to name, and how course activities can be used to demonstrate tracing the places where we have limits in our thinking. In other words, knowing how to name what we do not know is as valuable as naming what we do, but it is seldom asked for in educational contexts that emphasize learning as a transmission model, where evidence of learning is narrowed to students regurgitating principles an instructor has introduced. In my experience, making space for the unknown variables in student learning was challenging because I too had unexamined antecedent knowledge, and as such, I didn't fully anticipate what students did not know. In transmission models, it is easier to project lack of learning onto students, or to just create more instructions, than to really question our own antecedent knowledge. In the next chapter, I will discuss how a stronger focus on literate activity research as part of this project could help make the learning goals of this assignment more explicit.

Divergent Student Strategies for Approaching Complex Issues: Identity Word Cloud

The second divergence I saw in my course analysis was a difference between strategies I assumed students would use in assignments, and the strategies they actually used. For this example, I point to a smaller assignment within the first unit. During this activity–which is described in more detail below– my goal was for students to articulate the goals and attributes that they saw as important to describing their identity. I expected that the act of identity articulation would be straightforward, and that the intellectual work would center on identifying patterns from the features they identified. However, student work instead showed that students

had unexpected difficulties in naming traits they saw in themselves. Despite this divergence, students found strategies to help accomplish the task in front of them, even if they did not think they had the necessary skills to complete it. These strategies indicate how divergent uptake showcases learning, even if not in the way I expected as the instructor.

In the second week of class, I have students complete an **Identity Word Cloud**. For this assignment, they are asked to answer a series of brainstorming questions (see appendix). They do not turn their answers in unless they want to, but the questions are meant to get the students thinking about what traits and roles they value in themselves, as well as start to explore how our identities are socially constructed. Many of the questions ask students to think about how they describe themselves to others, or for a role, how part of their identity is built by how they present themselves to others. In terms of identity construction, then, this exercise is meant to begin the process of discussing how identity is used to create or complicate bonds between people, as well as a method of signaling to others who are like or unlike ourselves. In this way, identity is a performance or construction, based on the bonds they view as worth preserving.

What the students do turn in for credit is a word cloud that they make, along with a paragraph discussing the experience, including whether any information from the word clouds surprised them, how well they felt the words they used represented them, and how these different traits and roles contribute to who they are in their communities. Therefore, in this section I share student responses that went against my expectations, or that create questions about what "counts" for this kind of assignment, to echo students' words from earlier in this chapter. While the last section focused on how my expectations for a particular assignment created divergence, here I turn to how students navigated the divergence between my expectations, and their existing knowledges.

I return to this emphasis on "counting" because in talking with teachers about uptake, and in my own experience, there is sometimes a hesitance to "intervene" in student's uptake work, whether through feedback or assessment. However, students assign value to assignments partially in relation to which activities receive feedback. They take cues from instructors on where to place their effort, and rightfully so. For example, in one writing class, students expressed that they often did not value so-called "reflection" activities, because they were never given feedback, and so felt that it was an assignment the instructor was assigning because they had to, or that they would receive credit for whatever was said. While this is a simplification of motives, my point in including this idea is to say that in my courses, I did not see uptake as an addition or reflection– instead, examining uptake was the work of the class. In order for students to grow in their abilities to articulate and trace their identities and knowledge, I had to shape my feedback around those skills.

With that in mind, I present a few student responses to the identity word cloud assignment while asking: What does this say about divergent uptake and identity in the classroom?

Negative Perceptions of Identity

The first response thread I want to explore is when the uptake a student expresses is negative. In this case, I will refer to a student whose identity word cloud expressed negative perceptions of their identity. For example, the student wrote, "I was surprised by the number of negative words I could describe myself as but I think it also is about point of view." They went on to say that, "Some word[s] that may have a negative connotation but in terms of relating them to myself I don't [think] that they are inherently bad things". Here, the student accurately points out that the word cloud exercise is about perception, and thinking through how we see ourselves,

particularly in relation to others in a community. However, their answers surprised me because they stood out in comparison to other answers I received. For most students, they end the paragraph with a "positive spin." By this, I mean that they tend to highlight the positive traits they believe they have, or talk about how their identities make them "good" members of a community, which furthers the narrative of "success" as synonymous with positive uptake, instead of viewing uptake as separate from non-complex views of success as something that is achievable.

Since the goal was for students to analyze how their identities were shaped by communities, the student above who wrote about their negative perceptions of themself did more meaningful uptake work, because they acknowledged the messiness of uptake and identity construction. For example, they went on to write that, "when a topic is brought up that I have strong emotions toward, my words might come out faster than my mind can think it…I tend to be quiet if I don't have an opinion on something or if I don't know enough about a topic. This is also what I think other people should do as well." By the conclusion of the paragraph, they don't really come to a conclusion about their opinionated nature. Instead, they seem somewhat conflicted on how they feel about the trait. The ambivalence they express shows that they are languishing in the complex nature of identity. Ultimately then, when it comes to measuring uptake as teachers, we need to relish this ambivalence, rather than seek out perfectly formed conclusions, no matter how tempting. When students are willing to take risks by allowing themselves to acknowledge the ways they struggled, or even failed, to learn something, they are still engaging in worthwhile uptake work.

Using Outside Perception for Identity Building

Another common uptake during the identity word cloud assignment happened when students expressed how difficult it was to come up with words, or the fact that they did not spend a lot of time thinking about how they understand their own identities. For example, one student wrote, "I really struggled finding descriptors to show who I am…I wasn't sure what we would define "myself" because I would not have used some of these terms to describe myself at first thought." In order to work through this difficulty, though, many students turned to the strategy of asking others who know them well to help describe themselves. For instance, the same student who wrote the above went on to say:

> "To be honest I ended up asking a friend and my mom about words they would use to describe me, as they both know me pretty well. It was a good starting point, and also made me realize that a lot of words I use to describe myself are not words I use to describe myself as a person, but myself around others. I think, especially as an oldest sibling, I really prioritize how I act around others and try to think about myself in relation to how helpful I am to others."

By using this strategy, the student above was able to start working through complex identity questions by examining any dissonance between how they saw themself versus how others saw them. Another example of dissonance came from a student who wrote, "The only thing that surprised me within the word cloud is the word controlling. This word came from my mom and she feels as if I like to control things and I do not necessarily see myself that way, I just believe that I like things and people around me to be organized and a certain way." Especially because the activity was focused on identity as a social construction, and as related to communities that shape us, using the strategy of asking others and then reflecting on how those

answers mesh with the students' sense of self was a strategy I didn't necessarily expect, but one that led to revealing uptakes on their identities. In terms of the role of uptake in the civic literacies classroom, then, the process of negotiating how students see themselves with how they construct their behavior around their communities can help translate into other civic literacies because it gets them thinking about the influence they do have in their spheres, as well as how their behaviors influence how they respond in different situations.

To conclude the section on identity literacies, then, student uptake was related in large part to activities that asked them to consider the space they hold in various parts of their lives, from those close to them in the identity word cloud, to the role they play in larger communities they wrote about for their Discourse Community Analysis. To answer the question posed at the beginning of this section, the uptake strategies of discussing negative traits, or asking others to help compare their perceptions, while potentially unconventional, are still examples of uptake, even if they contradict the typical "success narrative" of a reflective piece. To quote one of the students, the identity word cloud "led to more questions than answers". However, just because the student could not definitively say "this is who I am and how these traits are beneficial to my community" does not mean they were not creating meaningful uptake. In fact, I argue that by relishing the complexity of the questions asked, their experiences led well into creating a foundation for examination that was continued throughout the course. The critical analysis of their own learning was a goal I wanted to emphasize in the course, and by looking at these responses using my research, I was able to see how to re-evaluate how I framed those goals, both for myself and for students.

High Stakes Assignments and Misaligned Expectations: Stakeholder Map

The third example of divergent uptake in the course data was in how learning does not always appear in direct connection with the activities we expect skills to emerge from. To display this divergence, I will point to another smaller activity within the first unit. My goals for this activity were first for students to be able to visualize and explain how communities are made up of many stakeholders, with complicated and diverse positions on issues. My partial motivation for this goal was to disrupt the polarized nature of popular civic discourse, which results in people reducing conflict to two opposing viewpoints, rather than a more nuanced view of conflict. This goal relates to my initial concept of contradictory uptakes.

My second goal, though, was to use the **Stakeholder Map** as a brainstorming activity for the Discourse Community Analysis, and by extension, as a means for me to gauge students' uptake of the project. When I looked at students' maps, it was a benchmark for me to see whether the issues they detailed were on track for the assignment. For me, then, if students turned in assignments that diverged too far from accomplishing the project goals, I would have to recalibrate instruction and work to realign our expectations. While a certain amount of divergence was expected, my only non-negotiable criteria were that the central conflict had to be well defined, and narrow enough for action to be feasible. In other words, a conflict like "racism" as a whole would not work for this project because it is too broad to realistically be examined in the space students had for the analysis. However, one racist policy could be a site of analysis. Additionally, a conflict had to involve disagreement. One student who identified "different way to weight lift" in his fitness community as his conflict did not work because it created a more informative project that didn't interrogate identity in the way necessary for the project.

In terms of divergent uptake then, this assignment mattered because students' divergent uptake had course assignment consequences, and as an instructor I had to define for the project which uptakes were manageable and which did not work. Without clear understandings of how divergent uptake works, our misaligned expectations could have consequences. Because of how I was using the assignment in connection to the larger project, I saw divergent uptake as problematic, or as an indicator that students were not learning the class concepts. However, what I learned from looking at student work from a literate activity research methodology was that divergence during this early activity did not actually predict a lack of ability later on in the unit. So, the takeaway I will discuss in this section about divergent uptake is that divergence is not necessarily indicative of a lack of learning; rather, teachers should expect that students will diverge in so-called practice assignments, as they experiment with course ideas. Additionally, because learning is messy, and recursive, we should not expect learning to occur in a way that is bounded to just one assignment or moment in time. Instead, we should see it as distributed across the course, and unevenly across time.

In the third week of class, I assigned the Stakeholder Map activity. For this activity, my goal was for students to practice several overlapping skills they would use in their Discourse Community Analysis. First, they would have to identify both a central community and an issue within that community to discuss. Then, they would have to break down that community into at least three stakeholder groups, which held specific viewpoints on the central question. Finally, they would need to describe what each subgroup's stake in the issue was, and how that stake might affect their viewpoint on how the problem could be resolved, while also reflecting on which stakeholder group they aligned with and why.

To give an example of what this activity looks like in practice, I've included a picture of the in-class model[11] we made in class using a sample conflict. For the in-class example, I used the community of our university, and the conflict was, "Should test proctoring software be used on campus?" For our example, the four branches that typically start to make up our map are students, faculty, administration, and test proctoring companies. From there, we continue to break down those categories more, discussing how students in different majors may be affected differently, as well as how neurodivergent students, or students without stable technology access may be impacted. However, we also use this opportunity to talk about how individuals within these subcategories may not be neatly sorted into one box or the other. For example, I mention how graduate students are both students and instructors, and so are asked to look at this software from two different angles. Additionally, we talk about how faculty are not of one mind on this issue. Some instructors in the articles we read were more likely to support proctoring software because they had concerns about cheating, but other instructors saw it as an accessibility or privacy issue, or they were simply concerned about whether they had the technological knowledge to use it, or if university training was adequate. So, while the identities we discuss in the identity word cloud are important, this activity helps to complexify how we view identity categories in context of an issue.

I bring up the Stakeholder Map assignment because I used it to introduce the concept of how our uptakes are always complex, and conflicting, whether that means describing how our uptakes differ from other people's, but also how our own internal uptakes are often dissonant. In creating the unit 1 project, I wanted students to see first how people can hold two different positions in a community at once (ex. graduate student teachers), and how positionality informs,

[11]See Appendix for photo of stakeholder map

but does not determine our values (ex. instructors disagreeing). Additionally, understanding how uptakes contradict helps make visible how even when people agree, they may do so for different reasons, or because of different values. So, while one person may disagree with the use of test proctoring software because it does not consider the needs of neurodivergent students, another may think it is unethical because of privacy. This distinction matters in public discourse because the solution to those problems may differ. Someone who thinks that such software is exclusionary may advocate for an improvement to the software, while someone who disagrees on privacy grounds may wish for wholesale banning of the technology. So, understanding the complexity and at times dissonant nature of conflict was a key goal in this unit. Since this was a central goal of the unit, I viewed this as a high-stakes assignment in relation to their Discourse Community Analysis, because I used it as a benchmark to see how they were understanding the concepts they would use in their projects.

Implicit vs Explicit Assignment Goals

To analyze the assignment sheet I used for this activity, I wanted to see what terms I used to describe the goal of contradictory uptake, and compare how those descriptions compared to student samples. On the assignment sheet, I indicated that my goal was for students to identify contradictory uptakes through repetition. For instance, I told students to "identify as many groups of people as possible." I continued in the same paragraph by saying that students should "remember to think about groups in lots of different ways" and that "you and others are likely part of multiple groups, whose interests might conflict." By emphasizing that I wanted students to be broad in their thinking about how to break down their chosen issue, my goal was to make it clear that I wanted them to think about all of the possible ways someone could approach the

issue, beyond just their own stake, and to disrupt the popular construction of "two sides", where a conflict is reduced to only "for" and "against" stances on a particular issue.

Beyond identifying stances, I also noticed in my materials that I was concerned with students being able to name the central conflict within a community in a way that is both broad enough to include many stakeholders, yet narrow enough to have actionable solutions on a small scale. The theme of "naming" as a skill is related to uptake because being able to put a name to what is actually in conflict in communities is key to uptake, and yet, in my own assignments, I didn't emphasize that as a learning goal, though I clearly thought it was important, because I added that it was "tricky". The fact that I added an editorializing comment on the assignment sheet itself indicated that I had seen students struggle with naming the conflict in past iterations of the assignment.

Because of the stakes I placed on the assignments, I reacted to divergent uptakes with more skepticism than I did on the identity word clouds. However, in this section I want to show how my assumptions that students were not understanding class concepts because of their performance on the stakeholder map assignment were not necessarily correct or indicative of how they were taking up the precepts of the unit as a whole.

Sites of Struggle as Learning

In the stakeholder map activity, I noticed that students at times had difficulty with identifying groups that did not hold their viewpoint, or, if they did, they frequently became frustrated, feeling that they had no power to influence those that disagreed with them. For example, on the stakeholder map assignment, one student wrote that "I think I need a new community because we cannot do anything and there is probably no resources I can use to talk about this." The student was discussing the lack of studio space at the university for dance

studios, and discussed how despite how students (both dance majors and minors), and faculty stressed the need for more space, administration was limited in their availability to provide more resources. And so, while they could identify the different stakeholders present in their community, they could not see a way forward to advocate because of the power barrier. In terms of civic literacies learning, then, it was difficult for me as an instructor to determine whether the student successfully completed the assignment. Had they learned something from the activity?

When looking at student journals as a researcher rather than a teacher, however, I noticed that many of them cited the stakeholder map activity as something that helped them understand the concepts of the unit, and were able to identify the goals of the assignment and what they learned from it. For example, one student wrote that "the stakeholder map activity allowed me to understand there could be many different stakeholders representing one discourse community. Stakeholders could have mini stakeholders within that one stakeholder and still have different perspectives on an issue." Another student wrote that, "The ISU community reggienet data collection stakeholder web activity helped me learn the power structures of discourse communities. This helped by showing each stakeholders stake as well as their bargaining chips and what demographics they were made up of." This student went on to say that, " If I have a certain view on a situation, it doesn't mean that the people categorized in the same stakeholder as me will have the same views as me due to their background and characteristics."

In terms of student learning then, I assumed from students struggling with the stakeholder maps that they did not understand what I was asking them to do. However, the amount of students that highlighted the stakeholder map activity as something that aided their learning, and the way they were able to articulate the goals of the activity, showed that they did learn, even if it wasn't necessarily the skill I expected them to gain. For me, the stakeholder map was a space for

students to articulate the basis of their project, like an outlining project. However, for students, they used it as an exploratory genre, and the first place to think through the complexities of their chosen issue, and their answers reflected that complexity of thought.

Re-Emerging Knowledges and Non-Linear Learning: the Rhetorical Film Review

The fourth divergence I saw in my course data was in how students were able to examine and reconcile their antecedent knowledge with new knowledge over time in the course. One of the greatest examples of the recursive and messy nature of divergent uptake is in the difference between my expectations of the third unit project, and what students actually described learning in that unit. My goal for the **Rhetorical Film Review** was for students to explain how one of three chosen texts displayed course concepts. Using ideas such as rhetorical moves and appeals, discourse community language, and other important terms, I expected students to apply terms to particular moments in the pieces they viewed or listened to in class. Instead, students used the project to compare how their antecedent knowledge of the communities we heard from differed from the actual words and experiences of different marginalized groups. The work of unit one, where we examined how our identities and prior experiences inform our responses to new situations, came back in the work of this unit, in ways that diverged from my expectations. In this section, I will examine how student learning about a given concept was not limited to one unit, but emerged throughout the course, and reappeared in unexpected places, reminding me that learning is recursive and distributed unevenly across time.

In the Rhetorical Film Review assignment, I chose artifacts for students to watch or listen to, which they then wrote a rhetorical review of, explaining how the artifact used class terms to describe a social problem for a community. Their review was comprised of three

sections. First, they were to summarize the film, naming the main points covered, as well as describing the rhetorical situation of the piece (genre, time period created, exigency, etc.) Then, they chose two segments from the piece that exhibited one of the course terms (discourse communities, rhetorical moves, rhetorical appeals, etc.) and explained how the inclusion of one of these principles built the argument. Finally, they were to write who they would recommend the piece to, and what they believed it taught about civic literacies principles. In the responses to this assignment, my goal was to see how students could apply terms we learned throughout the course to a real world example. However, in addition to my expectations, I found instead that students used the assignment as a space for navigating the conflicts between their antecedent knowledge and the information presented to them in the materials we used for class. In this way, it became a study in the ways my expectations conflicted with what students actually learned, despite that not being a primary goal of my assignment. In short, my goals for the first unit project became realized in the third project, which relates to the recursive nature of uptake.

Direct Goals with Indirect Outcomes

Looking at the assignment sheet for Unit 3[12], I had not initially seen any places where student uptakes conflicted with my expectations. Instead, my goals were more concerned with source evaluation, reconciliation of ideas, and identity construction. For example, I wrote that students needed to explain how the piece they chose "connects to 2 class terms, at least one of which from unit 3 (rhetorical moves, ethos, pathos, logos)." This communicated to students that being able to apply class vocabulary to a given text was one of the things that "counted" in the work for the unit. However, where I believe contradictory uptake had a place, even if unintentional, was when I asked students to "choose 1 of the 3 products" to use as the basis of

[12] See Appendix for assignment sheet

their review. I initially flagged this choice as identity construction, because I believed that the artifact students chose would reveal something about their identity, whether that be that they connected with the piece, or that it taught them something new. However, after looking at the student responses, I realized that it actually became an opportunity for students to share how the information presented *conflicted* with their existing knowledge of the communities depicted in each of the pieces. This experience serves as an example of how my initial analysis structure limited the way I looked at the data, and how a more complex view of divergence allowed me to understand how divergence was working in the classroom.

The largest takeaway for me in looking at my own materials here was that my initial goal for the project diverged in many ways from what students actually learned from the assignment. I viewed the film review project as a way to gauge how students could apply specific class terms to an external text, while also applying their knowledge to their own civic literacy practices and identities as they had articulated them throughout the course. Instead, I found that what students took away more often was an examination of their own antecedent knowledge and how it interacted with the texts we analyzed in class. While this diverged from my expectations, however, it was still important uptake work that revealed to me how their skills were changing from the beginning to the end of the class. Skills that I had seen as lacking in unit one came back in unit three more developed.

Students' Re-Examination of Antecedent Knowledge

To emphasize the way that students were able to compare and trace their antecedent knowledge, I point to the students who chose to talk about the YouTube documentary "We Need to Talk about Anti-Asian Hate". This documentary was released in March of 2021, about a year

into the COVID-19 pandemic. It used the exigency of the crisis to draw attention to the ways the pandemic exacerbated existing narratives about Asian-Americans, and traced the history of anti-Asian racism in the United States. While there were a wide range of topics discussed, students who chose to write about this documentary overwhelmingly noted the section of the video that talked about the "model minority" myth as the most impactful part of the film.[13] For instance, one student wrote that:

> "One scene that stood out to me in particular was the story of the model minority. While it has always been something that has been mentioned, and sets an unfair standard for Asian Americans to succeed with no credit, I never knew its origins. While many tout it as how it is a good thing because it is a positive stereotype, it can hurt the community in so many ways and is anything but harmless."

In this statement, I noted the section where the student wrote that they "never knew its origins." By stating the disconnect between the prevalent stereotypes they've heard and the history of that stereotype, it creates a contradictory uptake between what they have been taught about a group of people, and the information they are being presented with to contradict that viewpoint. Additionally, the conflict between what is seen as a positive stereotype and the negative effects that emerge from it can also prompt contradictory uptakes in student responses. While I will discuss this myth in more detail later in this chapter, what I believe this trend in student responses tells me about civic literacies learning is that the work of setting students up to see contradictory uptakes early on can help prepare them to reflect on those experiences later in the semester. For example, earlier this chapter, I described my fear that they could not

[13] The "model minority" myth is a prevalent stereotype that compares Asian-Americans to other races, stating that racism cannot be systemic because Asian-Americans are "successful".

understand conflicting views between groups in their Discourse Community Analysis. However, the theme showed up almost against my expectations in unit three.

To further emphasize the theme of how student's prior knowledge interacted with the materials shown for class, several students indicated in their projects that the information provided surprised them. For example, during a documentary on the origins of women's suffrage in the Haudenosaunee community, one student wrote that, "I think the main takeaway is somewhat of a unique one, and its that this film needs to exist in the first place. Most Americans are so ignorant about the Natives culture that was here before us and rarely look at them for ideas or things similar." Another student wrote, "This film is relevant to our lives outside of the classroom because it touched on a lot of things that history classes do not go into depth about or simply just don't discuss." Comments like this indicate contradictory uptake to me because they show how students are tracing their antecedent knowledge and actively using it to compare to new information. In terms of uptake, these statements indicate that they have practiced the skill of stating where their knowledge comes from over the course of the class. By looking broadly at how students' unit three projects compared to their Discourse Community Analysis, I could more accurately see how students were able to apply skills in new situations, even when that skill was not directly being measured.

One Student's Learning Pathway

To conclude this chapter, I will trace one student throughout the course, showing examples of each of the activities discussed above. My goal in this section is to show how the various aspects of divergent uptake coalesce to create a nuanced picture of how learning operates

in classrooms like mine, and how a framework of divergent uptake can lead to robust learning for students in ways that allow for future reflection and action.

I chose this student's work to highlight for two reasons. First, the particular ways the student articulated their identity throughout the course materials interacted with my own preconceptions in ways that are interesting to parse in a civic literacies classroom. The student, from the first day, talked explicitly about his conservative views, which due to my own experiences and teacher uptake led me to worry that the student would not be open to the material of the course. Despite my concerns as a teacher at the beginning of the class, in looking at his work as data, I found several examples of a student navigating divergent uptake in ways that accomplished the course goals. In terms of my own uptake, then, particularly in a classroom centered around social justice values, I was curious about how this student would interact with the course, particularly because I had experienced identity related resistance from similarly-minded students in the past.

I want to take a moment to explain what I mean and do not mean by resistance. First, I do not mean resistance as inherently negative, or something to be eliminated in the classroom (as though that were even possible). Indeed, in an uptake-centered classroom, resistance is part of the learning process, and is to be expected when contradictory uptakes are introduced. Second, though, I do find that there is helpful and unhelpful resistance, just as there are helpful and unhelpful uptakes. Resistance is not useful, or acceptable when it is disruptive or harmful to other students (such as interrupting class time, calling into question other student's lived experiences) or the instructor (yelling, violence, abusive language). While I had not experienced the first group, I had experienced situations in past classes where student's reactions to class concepts had resulted in anger or other adverse reactions, both personally and hearing of these

responses from other teachers. Because of these experiences, and because I knew the concepts I discussed in the classroom were potentially emotionally and politically weighted, I mention resistance as a factor because I want to acknowledge that instructors are justified in being worried about both their own well-being, and the well-being of students when topics of identity and social systems are central to the course. Keeping ourselves and our students safe is a primary worry.

And yet, I also want to acknowledge that dissent is not always harm, and that in order for students to become more socially aware, the ability to process harmful beliefs is necessary. To be clear, I do not mean that teachers should allow harmful speech in the classroom, or that marginalized teachers should accept abuse and bigotry. However, while I am marginalized in some ways, I also acknowledge that as a white woman, I have an opportunity to engage with students from my position, and work for social justice in ways that both interrogate and rely on my privilege. And so, to draw back upon my own background as a student who was raised in a socially conservative area, I acknowledge that I would not have been able to change my viewpoints, if I had not been given (a) access to information that conflicted my worldviews and (b) the space to work through the messiness and complexity of those views. If we do not allow for students from such backgrounds to acknowledge the difficulties of these subjects, we shut down the potential for change. And so, I pose the question: what kinds of transformation are fair to ask for in the classroom? Is it fair to expect at all? Or, in other words, in terms of antecedent knowledge, I find it useful to remember that there was a time when every concept I introduced to students was new to me as well as them, and so creating activities that encourage students to confront their existing knowledge and question it can manifest in unexpected ways.

Identity as Starting Place

To address the first point, the student in question self-identified as conservative, and involved in conservative politics. For example, in the student's identity word cloud, he says that, "I am a man who has done a lot of grunt work. To working fast food, produce, building decks, and most recently being an intern for the Scott Preston campaign." Reading this statement, I saw it as an articulation of an identity that the student thought was important to him. Since the goal of the assignment was in part to have students acknowledge the values they held, and how those values tied to their communities, I could ascertain that the student valued his work ethic, and that his experiences and conservative background played into that viewpoint. To further solidify that reading, I point to a later statement he made, when he wrote, "Also, as a Christian and a fisherman, I feel like in public discourse I am very pro-environment regardless of the politics of my party." Taking these two sentences together, then, I see an articulation of values that are important to him– caring for the environment– coming into conflict with the values of a different community he also valued. And so, from reading these statements, I saw an example of contradictory uptake between two communities the student saw as central to his identity. Since this assignment occurred at the beginning of the course, I understood that a student I initially assumed would be resistant to the ideas of the course might actually be better situated to critically reflect on his own uptake. So, despite my initial worry about encountering resistance, I found a student whose beliefs were very different from my own to be open about the conflicting uptakes he experienced.

Conflicts in Community Identification

After the identity word cloud, the next opportunity I had to look at his work was in his stakeholder map. For the map, the student identified his religious community as the discourse

community he wanted to analyze. Students choosing religion as a community important to them is fairly common, not only in ENG 183, but also in other courses where they are allowed to choose a topic or community they value. In his discussion of the main conflict he wanted to discuss, he wrote that he wanted to discuss how different groups of Christians "sought salvation." He went on to write that, "While they don't all meet and discuss the course of all Christians and how to properly seek salvation, they will debate all over the world and unfortunately, historically forcibly convert each other's followers." When I read his answers, I was conflicted, because on one hand, his choice of topic was very different from what I envisioned when I created the assignment. I was not sure that the topic would work within the parameters of the project.

On the other hand, I was extremely wary to intervene in his choice, because I saw how this community was closely tied to his identity. The worry I had was that if I asked him to change his topic, I would create a barrier for him in understanding later course content, because he would feel his identity was not welcome or validated. I also understood that my own uptake was playing a role here. As someone who has complicated feelings about religion that are tied to my own identity, I had to acknowledge that I had an emotional reaction to the topic. My own identity and uptake were conflicting with the student's uptake. Eventually, the feedback I gave to the student was that "my main worry is that you are tackling a very broad and complex issue, that I worry you don't have the space to tackle in a fairly small project. I might suggest thinking of a debate within your specific community, like your church, just to help keep things focused." In giving feedback this way, my intention was to allow him to write about a community that was ideologically important to him, while encouraging a different angle that would be closer to what I envisioned the assignment as asking.

Reconciliation of Conflicting Ideas

In revising his project in context with my feedback, his final draft ended up being focused on the church's image and how to reconcile the views of the church with "the changing world". What I found in this project was a student who was actually using the community he chose as a way to work through the conflicting uptakes he was experiencing and the disconnect between the different aspects of his life. For example, he wrote that, "I at times feel somewhat isolated by Catholicism. I put my Catholicism first over anything else but there are times I am pushed away because I liked to think of myself as a person who tries to do the right thing in life but so do most folks so I've always felt isolated when people from the church try to judge others on how they might choose to live because we are so very flawed in the eyes of God, so I feel like they have no right to judge." In this statement, the student is working through two conflicting uptakes: that his religion is central to his identity, and that the value he holds of not judging others conflicts with the behavior of others in that community. In terms of civic literacies, then, and particularly identity literacies, identifying when our values conflict with our communities is one step in naming a central conflict and deciding how to approach the subject, personally or communally. By naming how his values and his community influence each other, he is able to articulate the conflict and address it.

Later in the project, he concretizes this conflict by stating that, "I would like to think of myself as a logical person who believes and appreciates science, so this puts me in an awkward middle because some people in the scientific community and religious community think each other are crazy. I know people who think the idea of climate change is insulting to God and people think the idea of religion is as silly as the idea of Santa." This statement highlights again the contradictory uptakes that the student holds regarding his community. In terms of civic

literacies, then, in the Discourse Community Analysis, my goal was for students to be able to identify communities they were a part of and articulate how their viewpoint shaped how they approached a conflict within it, and I believe this student did that. But the way he worked through the ways he felt pulled in two different directions was more interesting to me as a researcher. However, this student did not reach a point where he took action on his conflict. Instead, he was simply at a point of naming and considering a conflict. While his answers lacked the clear articulation of action that other students did, I still think this student did important work in developing civic literacies, because he was able to identify a conflict in his values, and begin parsing through how he fit into the multiple communities and systems he lived in interacted in particular ways. The goal, then, in a civic literacies context, is not concrete answers. Instead, the complexity of thought, where the student presents information but doesn't come to an answer, is still civic literacies work.

Two Approaches to New Information

By the third unit project, we continued to work through the ideas of how our antecedent knowledge informs how we approach new ideas and intersects with our ability to find and evaluate sources, which I will expand upon in the next chapter. In terms of this chapter, though, the student had more opportunities to examine his predispositions and existing pathways. So, I contrast his answers about his own communities with how he approached texts I chose, expanding on different communities' experiences. We started with the previously mentioned documentary about the role of Indigenous women in the suffrage movement, and in his summary of the film, he wrote:

> "The scene that really stood out to me was the story of creation for the Indians for two reasons. First off, I saw the similarity between the Bible and the creation story both

> putting a strong importance on the life-giving power of women. But the other reason it stuck out to me was the film claimed that in fact, the opposite was true. Suggesting since Eve coming from Adams's rib, was a justification for sexism in the society hence why the west is so sexist. I feel like this could not be further from the truth, man needed women so much, that he gave up a part of his body, furthermore, in the bible, the mother and the father are to be honored equally. I feel that the point of this scene was rhetorical move, the goal was to highlight the sexism woven into western culture, to then show how much better native American societies were. Which is pretty effective without any other contest from Christianity."

While I will break this quote down for further analysis, I wanted to include it in its entirety in order to display what thinking through these ideas of contradictory uptake influenced by identity looks like as a whole. When teaching this documentary, I had encountered this reaction from Christian students quite often, and it was actually one of the first clues to me to investigate the connection between identity and civic literacies in the context of this project. To this student, the idea of the Christian creation story was so embedded in his identity that seeing an alternative interpretation was difficult to process because of how it interacted with his antecedent knowledge. Seeing these reactions as an instructor caused me to assess what my true goal was in showing and analyzing the film. Was the goal for students to emerge with the same understandings as me? Or was it to have them name and explain how an argument is constructed? And how are those two goals intertwined? Before teaching this text for the first time, I did not register the creation story segment as divisive, though it ended up being a challenging moment for many students. For me, I saw it as an alternate perspective and a window into how another culture viewed life, which tied into my antecedent knowledge because

I had studied creation stories in several classes throughout my education. However, for the students I encountered who had not read any of these stories before, the questioning of something that criticized or contradicted something so foundational to their identity was a space of rupture that impacted their ability to take anything from the text.

In terms of using this text in a civic literacies classroom, I found a few important takeaways from analyzing this student's answer. I found that it is incredibly difficult to challenge people's fundamental assumptions about the world, and that simply providing another perspective does not in itself lead to questioning of those beliefs. While it was not consciously my goal to change how students thought, it is an implicit goal of social justice work to make people think differently about how they approach people different from them, and in turn teach how our prior conceptions inform how we act in the world. So, since a goal of showing this text was to give space to an underrepresented perspective and show how gender operates in a context not often shown, I acknowledge that some student's deeply held beliefs about gender that contradicted my own created barriers in reaching that goal.

However, I cannot say that the student did not do what I asked. In the summary assignment, I asked students to identify segments that stood out to them, and name what rhetorical moves the creators were making by including that piece of information, and he did accomplish that. The inclusion of the creation story was a move, as he identified, to highlight how sexism is woven into the Christian model of society that much of the institutions of the country stand in. However, what happened is that in stating that the documentary was trying to show that Haudenosaunee culture was "better" than the culture he identifies with, the rhetorical move stood as an attack on something fundamental to his worldview. The disconnect between my understanding of the move and this student's understanding stemmed from the framing of the

Christian creation story, and a difference in defining what sexism is. While I approached the documentary with the idea that sexism is systemic, the student approached it from a more individualistic model, where because the communities he comes from reveres a particular brand of womanhood, they cannot be sexist.

Identifying how the difference in our viewpoints stemmed from these baseline assumptions, I came to realize how critical acknowledging and analyzing antecedent knowledge is to doing civic literacies work. If I were to teach this text again, perhaps I would do some kind of guided work before the film, in which we talked about what students knew about Indigenous cultures, and about what they understood about sexism and misogyny, and how they would define it. Then, we could have a conversation about how their pre-film ideas influenced the answers they gave after viewing the film. The goals of these changes would not be to "plan away divergence", as learning will always occur unevenly. Rather, the scaffolding could make our learning more visible, which could lead to increased practice in tracing our learning, even when it is divergent. In civic literacies work, the ways we introduce and scaffold these ideas throughout the entire process is critical. Despite our different conclusions about the film, though, this student did identify important information about a rhetorical move and its effect on him, even if it raised questions for me about what my project goals were.

To end this chapter, I will contrast the above assignment with his final film review, which was on the anti-Asian hate documentary. In this review, the student identified several areas where he saw points made in the documentary conflict with, but also intersect with, his antecedent knowledge. For example, he wrote that:

> "The documentary uses rhetorical moves really well as well in the model minority part. It serves a really vital role because it highlights our own bias and how Asian

> hate extends beyond negative stereotypes but in fact, positive stereotypes are a problem as well. This was important because for me at least I had this perspective that Asians were better at math and more inclined to excel in a more heavy intellectual field because of their upbringing. However, now that they pointed out that's wrong and harmful to their community I really realized what a crazy perspective to have."

This analysis is particularly interesting because the student also notes his own Filipino background. He wrote that " I think this documentary would work for anyone not educated on the subject including Asian people. The reason I say this is I kind of got some skin in the game because my father actually immigrated to the USA from the Philippines after the Marcos dictatorship was overthrown. However, my father has been welcomed to this country with open arms ever since he got here. But he definitely had to work harder than most to be in the position he currently has. But this has never crossed his mind."

Putting these two statements together, the student was able to acknowledge how the information in the documentary conflicts with the narratives he grew up with, but also make connections between what he's been taught and what he is seeing in the documentary. He is much more receptive to the information in this documentary, which builds on his own community, than he was the documentary that came from an outside community. In terms of civic literacies learning, looking at these two conflicting assignments indicates to me that students are able to navigate contradictory uptakes, as long as the perspective shown does not ignore or "attack" their fundamental belief. While I acknowledge that there is a line between allowing harmful speech in the classroom, I want to say that part of what I take this to mean about civic literacies and social justice in the classroom is that students need to be able to work

through complicated, contradictory, and messy emotions, without fear of reprisal for having the "wrong" interpretation of a text. Just because the student's understanding of the Haudenosaunee documentary conflicted with mine did not mean it was not sufficient to the course.

Allowing for such complexity does not mean allowing for hateful speech, however. Here, I return to an example from a previous chapter, where a student brought in an article that used language such as "vermin" to describe those with student debt, and implicitly to call people of color with student debt "vermin." When this came up in class, I addressed it as a large group, pointing out how such language is dehumanizing and works as a rhetorical move to disparage groups, rather than to show empathy for different walks of life. In the student's final reflection on this conversation, he stated that, "an author of an article could refer to a group of people as their or your people, serving a means as to dehumanize them", showing that at the very least, he heard and acknowledged how such language could be harmful, and to watch out for it in the future. To conclude, then, meeting students where they are at does not mean allowing harmful ideas to go unquestioned in the classroom. However, we also cannot shy away from allowing students to express that complexity in favor of teaching the "right" ideas, without questioning our own biases, goals, and uptakes.

Key Findings

In this chapter, I examined four key areas of divergent uptake in one course I taught, as well as tracing how one student navigated these four sites of divergence over time. By looking closely at the places where my expectations differed from what students created, I highlighted how teaching frameworks that not only encourage divergent uptake, but also expect learning to be divergent, across students, teachers, and situations, can better equip teachers to approach civic literacies learning because of the complexities of such literacies. As I describe in the previous

chapters, definitions of civic literacies already vary between disciplines, institutions, and individuals. Therefore, expecting any one framework to encompass all of a student's learning is disingenuous and ineffective. In doing this work, the major takeaways I found for myself and other teachers about the nature of divergent uptake were that:

- **Accounting for divergent uptake means building spaces for students (and teachers!) to articulate what we don't know**

Since concepts like prior knowledge and uptakes are often unconscious until we make them visible, it is important to both examine what antecedent knowledge we are bringing into our projects as teachers, AND build space for students to articulate the ways that their antecedent knowledge is insufficient.

- **Time plays a crucial role in scaffolding and understanding learning**

Accounting for divergent uptake shows us that learning occurs in ways that are unevenly distributed temporally. If our goal in implementing uptake principles into civic literacies classrooms is to trace learning, we need to examine where we believe we will find evidence of learning, and that it will likely not be constrained to any one project, unit, or course.

- **Students take cues in what to value from teacher feedback**

If we want students to do the work of tracing their learning, our feedback needs to focus on those skills. When there is incongruity between our expectations and the feedback we leave students, it is usually because we have unexamined or unstated expectations. Looking at our own feedback in conversation with our teacher-created materials is one strategy for finding these incongruities.

- **Divergent experiences and divergent learning are different**

When we account for divergent uptake, we often focus on making assignments that allow students to draw from their divergent experiences. However, in my research, I found that observing what divergent learning actually looks like requires a different conception of divergent uptake, where students use unexpected strategies, and state complex thinking that did not always map neatly onto my expectations.

- **Teacher uptake MATTERS**

Ultimately, when I began my data analysis, I was implicitly looking for places where student uptake differed from my own, and placing more weight on how students' learning was divergent. However, what I found was also evidence of how my own unexamined antecedent knowledge and uptake had effects on the kinds of learning that students exhibited. By modeling a literate activity method of research, I found one method of deeply examining my own materials in order to realign how I approached student work, instead of solely thinking about student uptake as the site of goal realignment.

In light of the ways divergent uptake appeared in the course, I focused mainly on the first and last course projects. In the next chapter then, I will use the second course project to describe how I introduced research and reading strategies throughout the course, and the ways students showed divergence in how they approached a research-based project. My goal in the next chapter is to briefly explain how an understanding of reading and research as literate activities encouraged the kind of learning students exhibited, and how a stronger incorporation of these concepts could better attune me toward divergence in the classroom.

CHAPTER V: THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC READING IN PLANNING FOR DIVERGENT UPTAKE

In the previous chapter, I described the ways that understanding divergence in both student and teacher uptake allowed me to see the complexity in civic literacies learning. However, for the objects I observed in the last chapter, most of the texts used to foster learning, including the artifacts students used for their film reviews, were chosen by me. Therefore, I did not get a chance to examine how students traced their practices in finding, and evaluating sources on their own. Therefore, in this chapter, I wanted to instead focus on the second project, where students found and analyzed their own outside texts. From these analyses, I was able to describe how different reading strategies allowed for certain articulations of student uptake, as well as describing my own divergent uptake of reading and information pathways as it appeared in my analysis. In this chapter, I will begin by explaining how my tracing of **information pathways**[14] (how students trace information-seeking practices) evolved over the course of the project. Then, I will describe how analyzing my teaching materials allowed me to see divergence in how reading was used in the classroom. Finally, I will show how student samples on information pathways showed that a holistic understanding of reading as inter-related literate activities allowed students to make their uptake visible, as well as trace their own individualized learning.

A Teacher Narrative

To begin, I want to take a moment to step outside of my position as a researcher to tell a story as a teacher. The purpose of including the following story is to show what divergence looked like for me as I navigated the progression from planning and teaching the ENG 183 course, through my analysis process.

[14] For more information on what I mean by "information pathways", see ch. 2 for an explanation of information literacies, and ch. 3 for an explanation of the new information pathways concept

When I began to shape what I wanted the course to look like, there was never a question that I would include readings to ground the course. I spent a great deal of time in my teacher education thinking about the importance of choosing readings, and of providing a variety of texts for students. However, what I hadn't spent as much time considering was what students (and I) would do with those readings. Despite my training in a genre studies and literate activity centered writing program, in a new education setting, I found myself relying on my antecedent knowledge of reading from my time as a student. The structure I knew was that the purposes of readings were as follows. First, they could be used to introduce specific terms or concepts that would ground the course. Second, they could be used as a tool for sparking discussion. Third, they could be used as genre examples, to model genre conventions of writing that students would do in the course. In my experience as a student, these three core uses for reading shaped class time and expectations. I read so that I could respond in whatever genres a teacher had instructed me to do; I read so that I could participate in discussion; and I read so that I could understand how to write for a given course. I want to be clear that this was not an understanding I came to consciously; rather, I had assumed based on my antecedent knowledge that these reading purposes were a given. While I have no doubt that this is an incomplete look into the varied practices used in the classroom, it nonetheless serves to highlight how much "discussion" and "close reading" were what I assumed as the primary reading activities in the classes I would be teaching.

Once I actually began teaching the course, though, I found that my limited understanding of reading as a literate activity made teaching very difficult. First, in my notes during teaching and my recollection of the class, student's reading responses were not doing the work of preparing them for class discussion and activities. I had begun feeling this discomfort even

before this particular course, and, from my outside research which I will explain later in this section, I learned I was not alone in this discomfort. Traditionally in writing courses, I assigned reading responses, which asked students to write about parts of the reading they found important or interesting, and how they saw it connecting to the course. By the time I taught ENG 183, I had transitioned to a method I had seen in one of my graduate courses, where students submitted one quote from the reading they found important, and one question to be discussed in class. Regardless of the method, however, I found that students either did not submit reading responses, or, when they did, their explanation of quotes and their questions were typically very surface level understandings of concepts, and therefore weren't doing the work I expected of preparing them for the topics we would be discussing. The perceived lack of preparation made initiating discussion on readings difficult because of lack of participation, and disconnect between what I saw as important in the readings, and what students found. Second, when students did not participate in discussion, the only ways I knew to respond were to either abandon discussion in lieu of lecturing, which I disliked doing, or to rush through discussions of readings in favor of other activities. It wasn't until after the course was completed, however, that I seriously started thinking about reading as a literate practice worth interrogating. And so, even before looking at my objects of analysis, I found myself asking two questions as a teacher: first, why am I assigning these readings if we're not doing anything with them? And second, if reading responses and discussion aren't working for readings, what will?

Returning to Research

Once I decided to focus on reading as a practice in the classroom, as a researcher, my strategy for looking at information pathways was to note any place in a student artifact where they mention a specific reading or course term in their assignments. My intention with this

approach to analysis was to map out which terms were taken up with the most frequency by students, as well as to see which readings were seen as useful by them, and to compare those findings with my own uptake of what I valued in the course. In these comparisons, I was looking for evidence of learning. As I saw it then, if a student mentioned understanding a term and applying it, that meant they were showing evidence of uptake.

However, in the midst of my initial parsing of the objects of analysis, I had the opportunity to begin studying the role of reading in English Department courses. As Reading Development Coordinator, I was able to observe classes, examine research on reading development theories, and talk to students and teachers about their experiences and difficulties with reading. This work brought a new understanding of reading as a complex set of literacies and practices, which, as I revised my analysis methods, became a helpful framework to understanding my objects of analysis. In terms of my research practices, this meant that when looking at the materials, I was searching for places where students engaged with texts in divergent ways. From there, I started to think about which reading practices encouraged student learning, and which practices unintentionally fostered a learning environment that discouraged divergence and went against my learning goals.

While I outlined much of the research on reading practices and its relevance in chapter two, I will note here that the factor that most affected my analysis was the idea that one of the areas students cited as impacting reading struggles was a disconnect between teacher and student expectations for readings (Ritchey and List, 2022). Learning about how students often didn't know what teachers wanted from them in relation to reading caused me to reflect on the role of divergence how I viewed my objects of analysis, particularly concerning new information pathways. If as a researcher I saw civic literacies as a complex series of inter-related practices,

then such a linear structure of analysis, which saw only a narrow set of answers as "proof" of learning, would not yield the kind of analysis I set out to examine. I did not understand the goals of reading beyond a very narrow set of knowledges to be conferred upon students, which they would take up and apply to various settings. As I worked with teachers to reframe the role of reading, and did this same work in my own teaching, I began to understand as a researcher that, while I saw writing as a complex and varied set of literacies, I had not structured reading as similarly complex in course materials.

As a researcher, then, my new interest in reading practices made me re-evaluate how I understood the role of reading in information literacies. I realized that as a teacher, I was treating reading as somewhat unidirectional, where students would read a text I assigned, respond to it, and then we would discuss and come to some kind of consensus about what that text meant in relation to the course. However, my new focus on divergent uptake in the previous chapter also helped me understand that reading practices are also always divergent, and so looking for some kind of "evidence" that students had understood concepts from readings in some specific way directly contradicted the purpose of this project. And so, as I reapproached my objects of analysis, the questions I asked when looking at my objects of analysis were, "what do student examples show about how they interacted with readings in the course?" and "how did the work that students did interact with my own understanding of what readings were doing in the classroom?" To answer these questions, my initial analysis strategy centered around the term of "new information pathways", which I explain in more depth in chapter two. To briefly recap, I was interested as a researcher in the ways that civic literacies education could be structured to provide options for reading and research strategies, rather than relying on antecedent knowledge to guide research practices, as I discuss in chapter two alongside information literacies.

And so, to determine what kind of mapping would actually reflect the complexity of civic literacies learning in relation to information pathways as a researcher, I restructured my approach to my objects of analysis by asking: how are readings being used in these materials? How is it being explained, and what practices are used to make the practices of reading visible?" By approaching materials from these new angles, I began to realize that I had not articulated what the goals of reading were in the classroom, either to myself or to students. Instead of seeing the readings as interconnected, I was essentially "starting fresh" every class, where each reading or set of readings was discrete from the rest of the readings of the unit. Because there were no reading goals laid out in any of my teacher-created materials, I could not discern as a researcher what students were meant to understand about what the goals of readings were in the course. While I was very conscious, as a teacher, of the ways we need to describe our understanding and the activities we engage in to make meaning and communicate, I wasn't including activities of reading as similarly complex.

Therefore, instead of looking to student work for "evidence" of learning, I started instead with my own materials, and looked for examples of how I structured discussion throughout the course, and for places where reading and research were mentioned as activities necessary to engage in during a project. As I looked, I began to see the importance of the story I told earlier in the chapter, and how I had failed to meaningfully incorporate reading as a set of practices, and similarly, the places where a better articulation of my goals for reading would allow for student reading practices to be more visible throughout their work in the course.

In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss the findings that my new method of analysis allowed me to uncover about how course readings functioned in the course. I will begin by briefly revisiting my Discourse Community Analysis materials, and how the course materials

failed to provide space for students to trace how they were incorporating research into these projects. Then, I will describe how the construction of the unit two project (the **Partner Peer Discussion)** forced me to create a new structure for reading discussion, which in turn changed how students engaged in different kinds of reading practices. Finally, I will describe the places in student work where I saw them tracing their own uptakes, by comparing their uptakes to others, and by comparing their new and antecedent knowledge from class texts and activities. By tracing this shift in approach, I will show how understanding reading as a complex set of literate activities, and articulating how these practices shape our learning and interaction with the world, we can see new information pathways forming in ways that improve civic literacies learning.

Reactive Uptakes: Discourse Community Analysis

In this section, I will describe the places in my objects of analysis where I noticed friction between the goal of articulation of information pathways, and the actual instructions and student work that emerged from the Discourse Community Analysis project. My aim in briefly revisiting this assignment from the previous chapter is to highlight the ways that my former approach to reading informed the kinds of instructions I gave, and in turn impacted the kinds of responses students were able to articulate.

To very briefly remind the reader of the Discourse Community Analysis, in this assignment students chose an issue within a community they considered themselves a part of, and analyzed the issue from the perspective of three distinct stakeholders in the community. Readings were used throughout the unit in a few ways, in ways that showed up in student materials. For the rest of this section, then, I will give examples from my own and student materials to explain how this approach to reading conflicted with the approach to learning I describe in this project, in ways that inhibited the articulation of information pathways.

First, I assigned some readings to introduce certain terms that would be used to ground our course work. For example, I assigned the article, "Understanding Discourse Communities" in order to introduce the concept of a discourse community, and its constituent parts to students. When actually looking at the data, however, I never explicitly mentioned that students were required to mention discourse community language in the project itself. Instead, I say, "For this project, you will be asked to identify a significant problem or disagreement in one of the discourse communities you are a part of" and "This project will build on course terms and concepts, such as discourse communities, stakeholders, and reflection on your own position in these communities." These phrases appear in the assignment description, which lays out the overall framing of the project.

However, in the actual instructions describing what students needed to make for this project, I wrote the following:

1) "Choose an issue or debate within your chosen community. Describe in a few paragraphs what the debate is, and a little bit of context about the community and debate as a whole, as well as your own stake and relation to the community.
2) Identify 3 stakeholders (people who care about or are affected by the issue) within that larger group. Describe who they are, why they care about the issue, and a little bit about their relationship to power within the community. In other words, who makes major decisions within the community? Who is considered or not considered when making decisions? You also want to mention and consider which stakeholder you align with, why, and how this affects your position."

In these instructions, I did not describe the direct connection between using discourse community terms from the readings to ground their explanation and analysis of a given community[15]. After looking at the assignment, I looked at the written feedback that I gave students on their drafts of the Discourse Community Analysis, and found the assumption that students would use course terms confirmed. For example, on one student's project, I wrote, " In your community context section, I would use some more of our class terms, such as discourse communities and the six terms from week 1. This will help you narrow down your focus as well, especially since "citizens" is such a broad stakeholder group." Another comment similarly said, "I think there are a few steps you can take to make sure your project fulfills the assignment sheet. Including course terms, such as explaining how your community is a discourse community, will help focus your explanation." While these are only two examples, there were several more examples of this exact type of feedback, asking students to connect back to course terms. However, until I began looking at these documents as a researcher, and specifically for how I understood reading as an activity of the class, I was not able to understand how my expectations and students differed. In fact, I found that I had been tacitly approaching research with the belief that by explicitly laying out expectations for readings in documents, it would lead to "better" uptake. As I started to understand the role of divergent uptake in the objects I was analyzing, I began to also see that this expectation was flawed, and that it was not the materials, but the overall approach to reading as a system of complex practices, that allowed for learning and new pathways for information, which aligned more with my goals in this project.

Comparing my feedback to the actual places where students were asked to articulate their uptake of texts, I see how the activities surrounding reading led to different kinds of uptake from

[15] I state this with the caveat that there is never a one to one connection between instructions, feedback, or outside materials and what students learn, as evidenced in the previous chapter

students. For example, one student wrote in their end-of-unit journal that in this unit, they learned about the role of jargon in discourse communities. To explain, they traced their learning back to one reading and one course activity. However, the way they described their learning helped outline how the activities of reading were different throughout the unit, even if I had not seen it before approaching the materials as a researcher. For example, they write that an article explaining the benefits and drawbacks of specialized language in discourse communities, "helped me define what jargon is and how to differentiate it from 'professional language,' which I beforehand thought were synonymous. Having the concepts and explanations in easy-to-see way made me understand the differences a lot better, and why the use of jargon can often times hurt more than help." In this answer, I see the student tracing their uptake in a very particular way, where the reading demonstrated a particular term and applied it to discourse communities.

Then, they go on to describe an in-class activity that helped them understand jargon in a different way. To briefly describe the activity, I split students into groups and gave each one a different real world text that came from a different discourse community. Then, they would discuss what examples of specialized language they saw in the text, and describe how usable the text would be to someone outside the discourse community, usually pressing them to consider the role of their own antecedent knowledge in their perceptions. Returning to the student's journal, they wrote about the activity, saying, "my group's article was on the car community, and how to change oil. I was amazed at how little of the article I understood. There were so many terms I had never heard of before, and if I picked up this article to actually learn how to change my oil, it would have been super discouraging." Looking at these two responses next to each other, I see how this activity still used texts, but until looking at materials as a researcher, I did not actively understand it to be a reading activity– or, at least, I did not see the texts from this

activity as serving the same purposes as the "readings" I assigned outside of class. From this analysis, I see how in the first unit, partially because of how I understood the reading practices of the course, I had not fully thought through the actual practices of reading. In the next section, then, I will explain how the introduction of a new set of activities forced me to re-examine the role of texts in the course, and make space for more complex practices, and tracing of divergent reading activities.

Comparative Reading: Partner Peer Discussion

Now that I have explained how an incomplete understanding of complex reading practices shaped the first unit project, I will describe how the circumstances of the second unit project (hereafter called the Partner Peer Discussion), forced my approach to reading to change in unanticipated ways, and how student work changed in turn.

Class Discussion Structures

To begin my discussion of how reading changed in the Partner Peer Discussion, I will briefly outline the objectives of the project as I saw them as a teacher, and how the circumstances of the project caused me to reexamine my approach to readings. In previous iterations of the course, I had reacted to my previously mentioned disappointment with student reading responses by creating an activity where they worked in pairs to find texts on a variety of topics, and use them to ground our class discussions. Since that activity went well, when I taught the section of ENG 183 used for this study, I expanded the activity to become a unit unto itself. For this project, I asked students to work in pairs or groups of three to identify an issue relevant to college students. Then, after finding an issue, they were asked to find two sources that described this issue to use to ground our class discussion. Prior to their assigned class, they were to send me their sources so I could review them and post them on the course page for the rest of the

class, along with a brief paragraph explaining why they chose these sources and this issue to share. After discussing their texts as a class, they would then send me a formal write up discussing what they learned from the class discussion, and how they viewed their sources after class in terms of credibility, specifically tying their writing to class terms discussed in this unit, such as ethos, lateral reading, and elements of source credibility.

While I saw the value as a teacher of asking students to find their own sources, I also wanted to create a contingency plan of sorts, in case students either did not complete their portion of the project, or if there was insufficient information to work from in their initial introductions. Additionally, I wanted to be able to review the topics and kinds of sources being chosen. Part of this concern came from a desire to make sure the information was relevant to the course, and that we would be able to discuss it in relation to course concepts. The other part was that since a course around civic literacies necessarily invites conversation about sensitive topics, I wanted to be able to frame discussions in a way that reduced harm if necessary, and introduced the issue. So, in preparation for the class discussions, I created the following structure to conduct our initial discussions of all issues to begin class. I also modeled this structure with readings I chose prior to discussions surrounding student materials, so the skills used would be practiced throughout.

Issues	This section refers to all of the subtopics described in the articles provided.	Core Issue: Student Loans Sub Issues: unequal necessity of loans for different groups, value of college, loan forgiveness, efficacy of loan servicers, federal vs private loans, etc.
Communities	This section refers to the different stakeholders affected by the issues described above	Ex: college students with loans, students without loans, universities, financial aid offices, lawmakers, families/parents, those who didn't go to college, first generation students, students of color, students financing their own education, low-income students, etc.
Values	This section refers to values different stakeholder communities hold regarding this issue. This section is directly tied to the subsection below	Ex: opportunity for growth, knowledge, access to economic equity, public investment in education, financial responsibility, fairness, economic stability, opportunities beyond college, etc.
Quotes	In this section, students need to back up the values they listed above with a quote that describes or corresponds with that value in the text/source being evaluated	

(Table 2: Discussion Chart)

In Table 2, I describe the different facets I used to ground each of our discussions. I wanted students to practice identifying how issues were often complex, and that there could be many intertwining facets under the umbrella of the same issue. So, in the third column, I give an example of the potential sub-issues under the umbrella of discussing the core issue of "student

loan debt." Then, I wanted students to imagine who different stakeholders in the argument were. Finally, under the values segment, I asked students to examine what different stakeholders in this community valued, and how those values emerged from different investments and priorities, making it clear that these priorities were going to be complex and potentially contradictory. As the final step, then, they were asked to back up their assertions about values with quotes from the text, and explain how those quotes indicated the different values they wrote on the board. I saw this structure as the next logical step after the Discourse Community Analysis, in that it built off of the skills we used in that unit, but added the next step of "research." However, at the time I did not grasp how I saw "research" and "class readings" as separate, isolated activities, rather than a complex set of inter-related practices. In the next section I will describe how my approach to research allowed me to see reading shifting in this unit as a matter of exigency, in ways that tie back to what I found in the previous chapter about divergent uptake.

Teaching Goals

In looking at this structure of and materials for this unit as a researcher rather than as a teacher, the first thing I noticed was how these criteria I used to ground our discussions built from and mirrored the Stakeholder Map Activity. While I did not intend this parallel, I can see how the ways I directed discussion correlated with different pieces of that assignment. For example, during the Stakeholder Map activity, I asked students to "identify as many groups of people as possible. Use the stakeholder tree we made in class as an example. Remember to think about groups in lots of different ways, and keep in mind that you and others are likely part of multiple groups, whose interests might conflict." These instructions are similar to the section of fig. 1 where I ask students to list a variety of stakeholders and issues, under a larger topic. The difference between the Stakeholder Map and the Peer Discussion structure is the explicit

connection to course terms and readings. In the Stakeholder Map instructions, I wrote "you will likely have to do outside research to successfully complete this project and answer these questions." However, I did not explain on the page how to incorporate research into their projects. As in the larger Discourse Community Analysis, research and reading were implicit skills I assumed students would understand how to use in their projects. In the Partner Peer Discussion, however, the assignment instructions provided a structure for how to connect texts to an issue, and the discussions we modeled over five weeks also built in practices to help new information pathways form and become habitual. In the next sections, I will provide student samples from this unit to explain how this new approach to discussion helped students articulate their uptake about information seeking in particular ways.

Tracing Strategies

The first theme I saw emerge from looking at student work from the Partner Peer Discussion was an ability to compare one's antecedent knowledge about certain sources, and their own information seeking habits with more awareness. For example, when discussing the student loan example above, one of the articles a student brought in was an article from a conservative think tank claiming that government subsidization was solely causing the student loan crisis. At first, I was unsure of whether or not I would allow the text to be distributed. Would I be platforming harmful beliefs, and causing harm to students? But, I ultimately decided to use the text, and see how our text analysis skills could help us learn to pick up on propaganda and dog whistles. We discussed, for instance, how the use of the word "vermin" to describe those with student loan debt was used to dehumanize.

In their write-up then, one student wrote that, "In the FEE article, there is a lot of deception which may have tricked me into seeing it as credible before this unit began." They

went on to write that "the article begins with mostly factual information but a ton of useful information. It then uses this information as a basis to go on a political and bias tangent about the "real" cause of student debt." The strategy of acknowledging that factual information can be used in a way that still perpetuates harmful ideas was a key reading strategy we focused on in the class, and the student used it to explain how research could not be sorted into discrete rules. They wrote, "even though most of the sources used are credible themselves, not using direct source data can become messy." This "messiness" served as an example of how viewing reading as a set of practices, rather than an activity in itself, could serve to help create information-seeking options for students. Rather than pointing to an article and saying that it was credible because it contained facts, he instead was able to take it a step further and analyze how facts were used within a larger piece.

Further, the strategies they used became more habitual, and more dynamic. They started to see the research "rules" they came in with become more like guidelines. For example, the student above wrote that, "when I learned about the different levels of bias a source may have, it helped change my perspective on these sources." They went on to say that, "if I were to cite this article, I would preface the information with some disclaimer. The general credibility may be low, but for a source that needs another perspective it may be useful." Instead of viewing credibility as a binary, they could articulate how credibility, for example, worked as a spectrum, and that he would need to make choices on how to proceed depending on the information given. In terms of information literacies, this was a choice between strategies, instead of one option because they were told this was the "right" way to do research. In conjunction with creating comparative uptakes then, students are not only able to compare their antecedent knowledge with

that of others, they can also not only trace, but compare strategies they have accrued, which allows them to see research as a series of choices, rather than a "rule."

From looking at student samples such as the one above, I saw how even when student understandings of research practices were incomplete, focusing explicitly on tracing how students were determining credibility built the foundation for continuing this work in later projects. For example, another student wrote that:

> "One activity that helped me learn what credibility is was the group discussions that we had to do. I think that this helped show me what credibility was because when we were sitting in different groups and were reading and talking about the articles with each other we would have to look for things in the article that made it seem either credible or not credible. This was a way to show that some articles have similarities with other ones based on how the information was presented and if there were hyper links leading to where they got the information from."

While this answer is an incomplete or simplified view of research, the fact that he could point to specific strategies (such as following hyperlinks to compare sources) shows that he is thinking about the practices used when we read texts. These pathways were reinforced during the Rhetorical Film Review, when in the previous chapter I noted students tracing comparisons between their previous and current knowledge, and how they came to those conclusions.

From these findings, I see that including reading for research in the first unit, even in a messy or complex way, could have provided opportunities for later reflection on their existing research habits, in a way that could have made tracing those habits easier, similar to how the skills from Unit One re-emerged in unit three. I had in some ways viewed reading as a linear practice, rather than acknowledging how the different reading activities of the course informed

each other recursively. I wanted to see students trace and acknowledge experiences they had not had, and I did not see how to do that without doing all of the work of researching for the students. By looking at the work of both units side by side, though, I can see how it was not only the materials themselves that changed, but also the various literate activities involved in the entire reading and research process. To explain, I return to the work of literate activity theorists, who posit that "for researchers interested in analyzing rhetorical practice, this cultural-historical remapping retunes attention" (Prior et al, 2005). In Unit One, the activities related to reading and research drew attention in one way, toward understanding particular terms and building connections between readings chosen by me, the instructor. In Unit Two, however, the activities associated with reading shifted. Now, attention was divided between a new set of activities– including students choosing readings for themselves, and myself creating a discussion structure aimed less at understanding pre-conceived terms, but more attuned toward mapping the complexities of the texts we were analyzing in the course. In short, then, across the units, the activities concerning reading had to change in order for learning to occur.

In the past, however, as a teacher I had never done this kind of shift in approaching reading. While the activities of each unit changed, the activities of reading never did, until I was forced to by encountering a new environment. By analyzing the Partner Peer Discussion materials, I see that by choosing artifacts themselves, but having others' uptakes of those materials to compare to, they can not only trace their antecedent knowledge, but compare it to others, which contributes to a more expansive understanding of civic literacies.

Tracing Antecedent Knowledge

Finally, in addition to tracing the actual practices involved in reading, students also used the strategy of comparing the way their understandings of texts changed from initial readings

through class activities. In the previous chapter, I explained the places where students compared their antecedent knowledge with new perspectives they saw in different texts I chose for them to analyze. Their strategies of comparison diverged from my expectations, because of the goals laid out in my materials, but looking back at the Partner Peer Discussion, I can now see how the work of this project laid the groundwork for students to engage with texts using these strategies.

For example, when one of the students above noted how he could have been "tricked" by a deceptive article, he was tracing how his knowledge changed, and exemplifying the way that antecedent knowledge continually reframes and recontextualizes old knowledge, which is part of why tracing the moments when that change happens can be so useful. To return to one of the definitions of uptake from chapter two, where uptake is described as a "snapshot" of a moment in time, this student's recognition of how his view of a particular article shifted is a record of what grappling with antecedent and new knowledge looks like.

Another example of this comparative work is not tied to a particular text, but rather the unit activities and discussions in general. In her unit journal summarizing unit two, she wrote that:

> "For my second unit journal, I wanted to write about ethos. It is the common theme throughout the whole unit, and also something that I think my opinion changed on throughout the semester.
>
> "My concept of ethos was definitely in a more community based mindset. I thought of ethos as, for example, a country. The ethos of America, like its values of independent freedoms and being a country of multicultural identity. However, this unit taught me that from a different perspective, it was a lot about credibility.

> A lot of times ethos might be the reason why you don't trust a news source, but just don't know how to articulate why."

She goes on to use some of the texts from the course to further explain which moments helped her come to this conclusion. By tracing her changing view of a particular term, this student isolated a moment where her understanding of a particular term changed. In order to do this kind of tracing work, she needed to be able to compare between texts to come to a larger conclusion woven from all of them. Since civic literacies are made up of a variety of complex sets of problem solving scenarios, the ability to synthesize information into larger conclusions is one type of information literacy. However, from analyzing reading throughout this chapter, I was able to see how the reformulation of the activity system surrounding reading could have helped inform how students traced their learning processes surrounding texts.

To return briefly to unit one, and to my position as teacher, in future semesters, I have a fuller view of the activities of reading in the overall unit. Even when I choose texts rather than students choosing them, I can better see how readings did not just introduce concepts in a static fashion, but that students are doing the work of explaining how artifacts, like news articles, textbook chapters, and videos, all make up and influence the ways people interact within different communities. By doing more tracing work of how these genres impact communities, it could help frame discussions about how to include artifacts in their own writing, from their own communities. Rather than understanding learning as students taking up terms in a particular way, to show that they know what a discourse community is, a new approach to reading opens up room for divergence in how we see texts as a part of the complex ecosystems of the classroom.

In chapter two, I described how reading practices are more complex than I had initially understood them to be in classroom spaces. By researching the varied activities of reading in

materials from ENG 183, I understand how divergent uptake of not only the texts themselves, but also teacher and student expectations of the activities of reading, play a role in tracing information pathways. In order to do the work I laid out earlier in this project of understanding the choices between information-seeking strategies and choosing between strategies, as teachers we need to understand the role of reading in the activity systems of the classroom and how it shifts in different situations. I see reading practices playing a role in understanding civic literacies education because in order to use texts effectively in a course, I had to be able to think about reading with more particularity about what texts were doing, and solidify what my reading goals for students were, and how those goals changed over time. Moreover, I needed to be able to understand that the activities of reading would change based on the new activities introduced throughout the course, in ways that conflicted with my own and students' often unstated prior knowledge about the role of reading in the classroom. However, by approaching reading a set of literate activities, rather than as a one-way gateway into knowledge, students used their divergent uptakes to make decisions about reading strategies, rather than falling into binary thinking and relying on antecedent knowledge as default.

CHAPTER VI: USING LITERATE ACTIVITY RESEARCH TO APPROACH AND OBSERVE DIVERGENT LEARNING

By engaging in the work of this project, I first and foremost gained a better understanding of how literate activity systems function as a method for approaching the activities of course design and teacher research with both intentionality and complexity. In my course design, I assumed that by building spaces for examining uptake into the course– through reading responses, journals, and asking metacognitive questions– I was doing the work of accounting for divergence. I was valuing the process over the product. However, by approaching my materials in conversation with student work, and tracing our uptakes through a literate activity research methodology, I was able to see how my own antecedent knowledge, and my own changing uptake of the activities in the classroom space, were just as influential on the work students created, and the activity systems of the classrooms as the students' uptake. I was also a participant in the activity system, and as such, needed to interrogate the same kinds of concepts I was asking students to work through.

When thinking about teacher-created genres, like syllabi, or assignment sheets, I had implicitly revised them using one of two methods: either an additive method, where I identified what I assumed was the "cause" of the divergence between my expectations and student work and added new language to stave off the confusion, or through a wholesale revision of the activity or project. From this project, however, I gained a method of examining the work of a course after the fact with a broader scope. Instead of thinking of significant divergences as failures, either for me to explain my values and goals, or for the students to understand them, I could better identify how I was thinking about the entire activity system of the unit or the course,

instead of viewing the assignment or activity in isolation. In this way, I could find a balance between seeing all divergence as equally valid, and creating activities which implicitly limited divergence, or did not allow me to see that divergence. In short, you can't course plan away divergence– there is no "perfect course plan" where everything will happen the way you want it to.

In terms of teacher-research as an activity then, this method of mapping uptakes can be used in course planning to process the results of a course intentionally, instead of in a reactionary manner. In my research, I found that many of the skills emphasized in earlier units– even ones that students initially struggled to articulate– showed up in later units, when I did not expect them to. By tracing student uptakes across the semester, I was able to see the ways that learning did not occur in a linear manner, but instead happened recursively. This project presented examples of how a literate activity research methodology makes that recursivity visible by observing what skills students were using, instead of what skills I expected or assumed them to use within a specific project. In other words, during course design, I got so wrapped up in outcomes and objectives that I lost the big picture.

Civic Literacies

Types of Civic Literacies

While many of the takeaways described in the previous section can be applied broadly to a wide set of teachers wanting to investigate the work of their classrooms, this project also emerged from my struggles in creating a course design based on a complicated set of practices– civic literacies– that caused me to map student and teacher practices in particular ways. As part of this planning, I developed three categories of knowledges– identity literacies, information-seeking literacies, and action-focused literacies– that described broad sets of practices that people engage

in when engaging in the work of democratic citizenship. The work of breaking down something complex, like civic literacies, into these categories helped me understand what I wanted to teach in this course differently. Instead of creating learning outcomes based on concepts, I used a literate activity framework to understand what practices made up civic literacies, and how those practices would translate into specific classroom activities and productions.

The first category, **identity literacies,** referred to the ways that civic participants, including students and teachers, name their communities, values and embodied attributes, as well as how these affiliations and traits shape how they interact with the world, as well as develop strategies for gaining awareness of the influences of their prior knowledge in order to manage its influence in the future. Through this project, I learned that because our identities are both socially constructed and always in flux, how we name our identities is dependent on the situation, and as such, we benefit from more particularity, instead of broad and open choice. I also learned that my identity and prior knowledge as the teacher contributed to how I shaped course activities, in a way that is particularly important to consider for civic literacies learning, particularly because the topics involved in teaching civic literacies are often just as emotionally and politically complex, and embodied, for teachers as they are for students.

The second category, **information seeking literacies,** referred to the ways I asked students to trace the activities and resources they used through the entire research process, from how we conceptualize an issue before seeking sources, through how we find information, to how we evaluate it and incorporate it into our own schemas. By interrogating the ways that I scaffolded these literacies throughout different projects, as well as how the concepts of prior knowledge and identities fold into how we approach research practices, I learned that because civic literacies spans a variety of tools, platforms, and topics, an approach rooted in uptake and

tracing is useful precisely because it *can* span these complex systems. By focusing not on teaching specific tools, or methods, and instead being flexible in our approach, we can both adapt to ever-changing circumstances, and also develop skills instead of rules.

The final category, **action-focused literacies**, refers to the ways that we translate our identities and information into new approaches to act on our uptakes. We do this in a variety of ways that are situated in particular contexts, which include our prior knowledge, embodied identities, community knowledge, available information, and means to act, among other concepts. What an uptake and literate activity focused approach helped me see about action-focused literacies is that, as with information-seeking literacies, the ecosystems of civic literacies are complex, and require an equally complex framework for study. So, rather than encouraging certain kinds of actions– which students might not be ready to take– focusing on developing skills which build confidence in both understanding how we are already entrenched in different civic discourses, and the ways to parse new information on the topics important to us can build students' civic literacies.

Types of Civic Literacies Practices

In addition to the categories of civic literacies described above, I also identified five practices key to enacting civic literacies learning in a variety of classrooms, which are:

Identity Construction: Identity construction refers to the ways we create opportunities to trace and map their pre-existing knowledges or experiences, embodied identities, social affiliations, and values. It also refers to the ways we build practices which help students to draw connections between these experiences, identities, and values and new information they haven't experienced.

Contradictory Uptakes: Contradictory uptakes refer to the ways we build spaces for students to see how uptakes intersect in different situations. These intersections include how new

information conflicts with ideas a student holds within themselves, how viewpoints of other students intersect with the students' own uptake, and how the student's uptake intersects with teacher uptakes.

New Pathways for Information Seeking: This category refers to the ways instructors build activities that ask students to trace how they are finding, reading, evaluating, and using sources from a variety of platforms, utilizing various tools and practices.

Material Effects of Uptake: This category refers the ways instructors build spaces for students to map and acknowledge the social and personal consequences of our uptakes, particularly in conversation with the other practices described above. In particular, it refers to the activities we create to highlight how these effects become part of the decisions we make when creating or reading different texts.

Reconciliation of Uptake: Finally, reconciliation of uptake refers to the ways we build spaces for students to process their contradictory uptakes, typically by placing their contradictory uptakes in comparison to each other, or by tracing the antecedent and new knowledge in conversation.

Through this list, I found that these categories are not features of learning, as I initially thought, but instead a way of naming uptake-based practices particularly for civic literacies learning. Additionally, while I initially created these categories as a list of skills I wanted to identify in student work, I learned that the ways teachers interact with these categories also have consequences, particularly in a civic literacies context.

Research Takeaways

By using the literate activity research methodology I describe earlier in this chapter, I was able to see the ways that an uptake-focused framework encourages us to see learning as

multidirectional, uneven, recursive, and above all, complex. While I explain above what this methodology teaches us about *how* to research our own classrooms, in this section, I want to list what my research made visible about teaching and divergent uptake.

- **Divergent experiences are distinct from divergent learning**

While I had accounted in my course design for students to voice their divergent experiences, I had not considered that this was not the same as planning for divergent learning. Tracing for students' divergent uptake meant seeing that the different paths students took while navigating the work of the course– including the ways it diverged from the school success story, my own expectations, and course goals– were nonetheless evidence of learning. Since the goal of the course was to understand the role of uptake in civic literacies learning, the fact that they tried meant more than whether they could use a certain set of terms "correctly."

- **Accounting for divergent uptake means building spaces for students (and teachers!) to articulate what we don't know**

Since concepts like prior knowledge and uptakes are often unconscious until we make them visible, it is important to both examine what antecedent knowledge we are bringing into our projects as teachers, AND build space for students to articulate the ways that their antecedent knowledge is insufficient.

- **Time plays a crucial role in scaffolding and understanding learning**

Accounting for divergent uptake shows us that learning occurs in ways that are unevenly distributed temporally. If our goal in implementing uptake principles into civic literacies classrooms is to trace learning, we need to examine where we believe we will find evidence of learning, and that it will likely not be constrained to any one project, unit, or course.

- **Students take cues in what to value from teacher feedback**

If we want students to do the work of tracing their learning, our feedback needs to focus on those skills. When there is incongruity between our expectations and the feedback we leave students, it is usually because we have unexamined or unstated expectations. Looking at our own feedback in conversation with our teacher-created materials is one strategy for finding these incongruities.

- **Divergent experiences and divergent learning are different**

When we account for divergent uptake, we often focus on making assignments that allow students to draw from their divergent experiences. However, in my research, I found that observing what divergent learning actually looks like requires a different conception of divergent uptake, where students use unexpected strategies, and state complex thinking that did not always map neatly onto my expectations.

- **Teacher uptake MATTERS**

Ultimately, when I began my data analysis, I was implicitly looking for places where student uptake differed from my own, and placing more weight on how students' learning was divergent. However, what I found was also evidence of how my own unexamined antecedent knowledge and uptake had effects on the kinds of learning that students exhibited. By modeling a literate activity method of research, I found one method of deeply examining my own materials in order to realign how I approached student work, instead of solely thinking about student uptake as the site of goal realignment.

- **The types of student productions that make up the unit influence the activities**: If the goal is to get students thinking about their uptakes, the kinds of genres they're creating need to match that. If I want students to trace how an artifact we looked at as a class interacted with their antecedent knowledge, an essay that instead asks them to tie their

learning to specific terms goes against the way I conceptualized the course. Similarly, the practices need to change based on the specific ecosystem of the unit. Approaching reading with the goal of tying it to research is different from the activity of using readings to teach certain frameworks, and I can't approach them the same way.

- **Who is choosing the materials also influences how we scaffold information**: When approaching information-seeking activities, where information comes from matters. When the instructor chooses the reading materials, what I value and what students will value will differ, and planning for divergence can help us introduce readings in ways that get across our goals, while still attending to student understandings. Additionally, when students choose texts for the course, in a variety of ways, we may need to develop new practices and approaches for using these readings. In both cases, the purpose of including texts in a course needs to support the activities of the unit.

Flexible Exercises for Teaching

In terms of further implications, I want to use this space to give a few examples of how the work of this project can be used in classes not explicitly focused on civic literacies learning. While the Rhetoric for Civic Literacy course was explicitly designed for outcomes on "democratic citizenship", I argue that the exigencies of political and societal tension require attention to civic literacies in a variety of courses. As such, the literacies I identify in chapter two remain relevant even in other courses. And so, in this section, I will provide some examples of how I have adapted activities and practices found in this project into other classes. By providing these examples, I want to show how the shifting activity systems of the courses required me to change the focus of the activities, and explain for myself and students how different civic literacies still matter across subjects. The work of adapting these activities helped me to

understand and describe how the literacies described in this project help us take particular actions, and explicitly name learning in divergent ways.

Identity Word Cloud

First, despite the surprises I describe regarding the Identity Word Cloud assignment I describe in chapter three, I have found the activity to be useful in a variety of courses for beginning the work of students tracing their identities, and considering how it is influenced by different histories and social factors. When teaching English 101, and Advanced Composition– a course primarily for upper level English Majors– I adapted the activity so that students would make two word clouds. One would be for how they see themselves in a sphere they define– some went outside of the classroom exclusively, while other still saw student as part of their identity. The second cloud would be specifically focused on how they saw themselves as a writer, even if that meant that they didn't hold that identity. If that was the case, they were encouraged to brainstorm about how they felt when they were made to write.

When completing this activity in new spheres, there were a few interesting takeaways. First, I was interested to find that even in a class full of English majors and writing minors, there was a lot of ambivalence toward claiming "writer" as an identity. Students expressed worries about being unqualified, or experiencing anxiety around writing, or even outright not liking many genres of writing. To be clear, as an instructor, I learned to love these answers– even now, writing this dissertation, I have experienced a great deal of anxiety and ambivalence, and yes, even dislike of writing. Like with civic literacies, writing instruction is similarly entangled with what I called identity literacies. By tracing and articulating the ways the identity of "writer" is complex affectively and practically, students in this course had a starting place for the first assignment, which was tracing a writing "rule" or "story" that they had internalized over the

years. For many of these students, who were planning on pursuing either the teaching of writing or professional writing, this identity tracing activity opened up opportunities for us to have conversations about what writing allows us to do, instead of seeing it as solely an identity we do or do not possess. Teaching in a way that is attuned to divergence means that I'm not looking for students to tell me the "success story." Instead, we discussed as a class the role of metacognitive and tracing work, and used this activity as a way to start seeing divergences in how we name our identities, even to ourselves.

Another place where I use this assignment is in a Writing for Business and Government Organizations course. In this class, the first project I have students complete is a resume project. As part of the preparation for making a resume, I have students create two word clouds– one for how they see themselves generally, and one using words they think are important for a resume. Then, they compare the two word clouds and write about whether there were differences or not and why they made the choices they did. Again, this activity helps students visualize and trace their identities, articulating how they made choices about which traits to highlight in a given space or community. While this course is not explicitly focused on civic literacies, we discuss the ways that documents like resumes are nonetheless political, particularly because of the ways implicit bias and gatekeeping play a role in hiring decisions. As such, the skills of acknowledging and tracing which facets of our identity we name in certain spaces, and which we exclude, and the ways those descriptors vary across communities, creates space for conversations about the role of identity as a concept in various professional communities. Additionally, the next step after tracing these identities is to talk about how we demonstrate those identities through action. For example, if someone writes that they are "responsible", we discuss what that looks like in actions, or how that perception can be shown in an example in an interview, or

cover letter. Through these actions, we use identity literacies to help trace how our understandings of our identities are shaped by the communities we participate in.

Discussion Format

Another way the work of this project can inform a variety of courses is through a dynamic understanding of reading strategies within a course. To again use the Business Writing course as an example, I have used the work of this project to inform how I approach readings in a variety of ways throughout the class. At the beginning of the course, we talk about the different kinds and purposes there are for reading within the class, explicitly naming what the various goals of reading are for this particular class. With these goals in mind, I assume less control over how reading discussion goes in the course. Instead, students take on different roles within their reading groups, with each member approaching readings from a different angle each week in a rotating fashion. By approaching readings in this way, students get to practice reading as different activities, while also building some community between their groups. I have found that this approach as one way of using readings in the classroom has also helped me to embrace divergence in the ways students will approach readings, but also feel less pressure to completely direct discussion of the readings. That way, my role in assigning readings can be to focus on the other kinds of reading activities in the classroom, whether that is defining specific terms and mapping the use of those terms, using them as genre examples, or other work.

Beyond discussion as a reading activity, I want to end this section by discussing again how I have adapted one reading activity from chapter four in a different course. In the third unit of the Business Writing course, I ask students to research and describe an ethical issue in their field, using a genre of their choice. Through this project, they make discussions about audiences, and language in a way that ties closely to the different civic literacies I discuss throughout this

project. As such, for this unit, I decided to incorporate the discussion structure I discussed in chapter four, with students searching for issues, communities, and values within different course readings.

The activities of reading is different in this unit than it was for ENG 183, because students are not choosing the readings for class discussion– I am. Instead, I use the chart to guide our discussions because it helps to orient us toward a new kind of reading than we had done throughout the rest of the semester. Instead of reading to understand concepts, or to model a certain genre, this structure demonstrates reading as an activity that helps us identify issues, and map out the complexity of audiences for a given issue. While they are creating in a range of genres, all students will be using research genres to present information. In this context, this reading activity helps students practice seeing their audiences as complex and varied, and understand how a given issue is multi-faceted. By using a similar format in two different courses, I am able to see more clearly how the activity systems of reading differ in the courses, and create flexible activities, which help to shape how I approach the practices of reading and civic literacies not as interchangeable, but as useful for particular systems and purposes.

Future Work

Looking to the future, I see this group of literacies as growing and changing, because of how it concerns constantly shifting social conditions, and because uptake itself requires the constant revision of how we understand the world. While I have created these strategies with the knowledge that they are intended to be used flexibly, and in a variety of contexts, I nonetheless want to encourage for myself and others a view of teaching that does not favor complacency. By looking at my own materials in conversation with student materials, I was able to see how my own unconscious perceptions of learning shaped my teaching, in a way I would not have had I

solely looked at student work. As such, I hope that this work also encourages educators to look at the role of their own metacognition in teaching, and observe how we adapt over time in new teaching situations. I began this project by discussing one moment in time that had great ripple effects in how I understood teaching. Now, I leave it with the understanding that this project is in itself a moment of uptake– one moment, influenced by the time it is created, that will change with time, and that I and others can revisit and revise as we experience new moments, and new circumstances to teach and learn within.

To conclude my dissertation, I want to return to the story I told at the beginning about my feelings of helplessness as a student and teacher in the wake of great upheaval. After this research, I have more questions than answers, and it would go against my findings on divergent uptake to pretend I am satisfied with that discomfort. However, what this research does allow me to see is that I can at least not become complacent in how I plan, how I teach, and how I approach student work. The work of this project was difficult, and complex, and the urge to shut down and revert to uncomplicated and untrue narratives of learning, where I just looked for students to use terms in the way I wanted, was strong. However, by engaging in the deep uptake work I am asking of students, I have a better perspective on both what is needed in civic literacies classrooms, and of the difficult work I am asking students to do in my classes.

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APPENDIX A: COURSE NOTES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Fig. 1 Photograph of Stakeholder Map

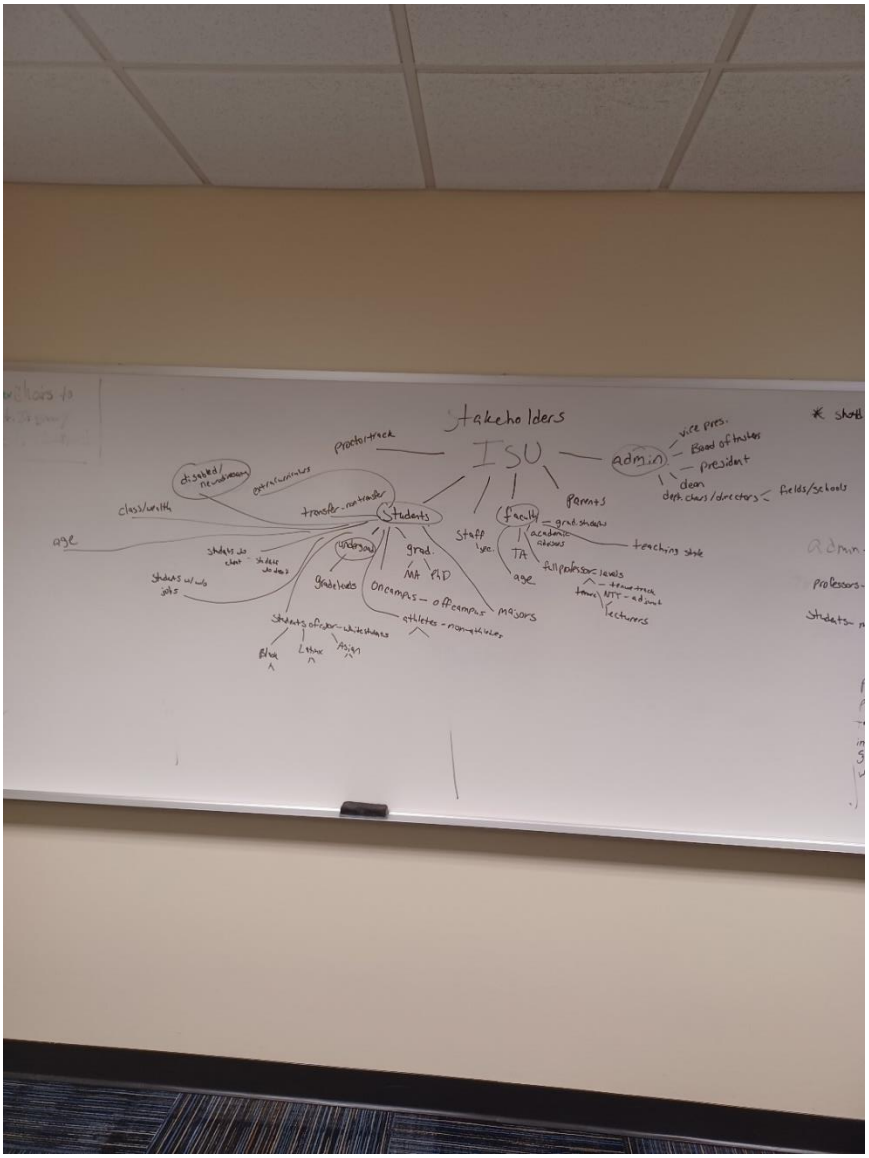
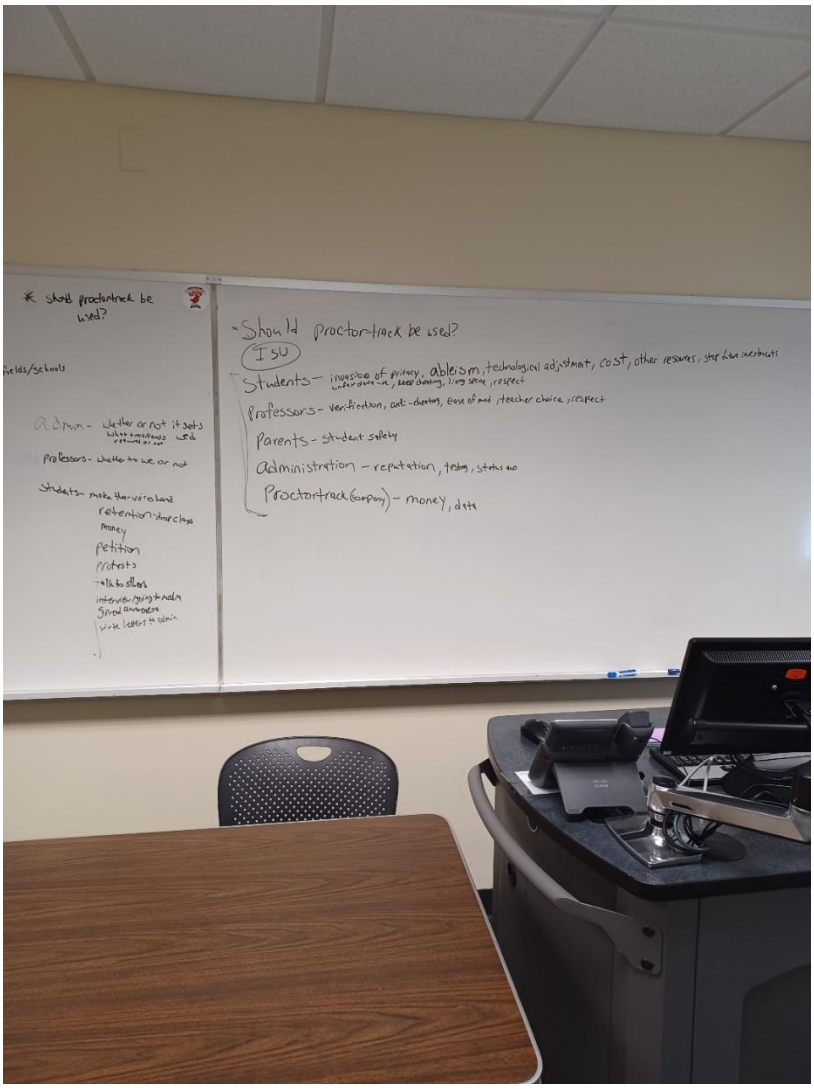


Fig. 2: Photograph of Notes



UNIT 1 PROJECT: IDENTIFYING COMMUNITIES AND ISSUES

Project Goals: 1) To identify an issue in a community you are a part of 2) to identify multiple stakeholders in an argument and acknowledge how their relation to power affects their understanding of the issue

Project Description: For this project, you will be asked to identify a significant problem or disagreement in one of the discourse communities you are a part of. Then, using a variety of sources, including your own research and the rhetorical concepts and strategies we've discussed in the course, you will describe 3 different stakeholders in the discussion. This project will build on course terms and concepts, such as discourse communities, stakeholders, and reflection on your own position in these communities. This project should be 2-3 pages, double spaced, or between 600 and 1,000 words. Multimodal options are also welcome- communicate with me if you would rather do your project in a video or audio format.

1. Choose an issue or debate within your chosen community. Describe in a few paragraphs what the debate is, and a little bit of context about the community and debate as a whole, as well as your own stake and relation to the community.
2. Identify 3 stakeholders (people who care about or are affected by the issue) within that larger group. Describe who they are, why they care about the issue, and a little bit about their relationship to power within the community. In other words, who makes major decisions within the community? Who is considered or not considered when making decisions? You also want to mention and consider which stakeholder you align with, why, and how this affects your position.

In regards to the last piece, when thinking about stakeholders, a good strategy is to choose one group that has a lot of power, one group that you are a part of, and one group that you don't know a lot about.

Project Components:

Participation: 50 pts.
Project: 100 pts.
Unit Journal: 50 pts.
Identity Word Cloud: 25 pts.
Stakeholder Map: 25 pts.
Draft: 25 pts.
Peer Feedback: 25 pts.

Due Dates:

Identity Word Cloud: Sept. 4

Stakeholder Map: Sept. 12

Draft: Sept. 19

Peer Feedback: Sept. 23

Project and Unit Journal: Sept. 26

IDENTITY WORD CLOUD

Objective: To begin brainstorming and visualizing the attributes and roles that you bring to and embody in your discourse communities.

Instructions:

1. Begin by using some of the following brainstorming activities to come up with words to describe you:

a. What are some of the roles you take on in your life (student, sibling, team member, friend?) What actions or traits do you use to fulfill those roles?

b. What is a story that you would use to explain who you are to someone else?

c. What is a story that others have used to describe you?

d. From these stories, what words stand out?

e. What traits or descriptors do you feel are important to who you are?

2. Once you have compiled a list of words or phrases, use www.wordclouds.com to create a visual map of your identity. Feel free to make multiple, using different shape options that represent you. You can choose to blend your roles together or make multiple word clouds for different roles

3. Along with your word cloud, turn in a paragraph (150-300 words) reflecting on your experience. Did anything surprise you? How do your word cloud(s) represent you? Connecting to the class and Unit 1 project, how do these parts of your identity contribute to who you are in public/civic conversations

PAIR DISCUSSION PROJECT

Objective: For you to discuss a topic of interest to you on campus (or for college students generally), while getting to practice identifying sources and developing questions to demonstrate your civic literacy.

Instructions: On the days of 10/12, 10/19, 10/24, 10/26, we will have group discussions, based on readings that you pick and questions that you write. You will:

1. Identify an issue on ISU's campus that affects you and your classmates
2. By the Monday before your discussion at noon, you will send me two sources, along with at least 300 words describing your chosen issue, as well as 10 discussion questions. These questions should not be answerable with yes or no. I will give you feedback on your questions before Thursday.
3. In class, you will talk a little bit about your chosen artifacts, and why you chose this issue. Then, I will help you lead discussion on the issue.

4. After your discussion, you will send me a minimum 600 word write up, reflecting on how you researched your issue, what strategies you used from class, how the discussion went, and what you learned. This will be due by the Monday after your discussion.

Possible questions to consider for your write up include:

1. The context of your piece. How current is it? How do you know the information is timely and relevant?
2. How does your topic relate to your audience of college students? Who is the piece written for and how do you know? How does this piece compare to other articles you researched?
3. What do you know about the author of the piece, as well as the publisher of the site it's hosted on? How does this help or hurt their credibility?
4. Describe some of their sources. Where does their information come from? How do you know their sources are accurate? What claims do they use as evidence?
5. What is the purpose of the piece? Knowing the purpose, do any claims stick out as misleading?

For course terms, consider strategies such as lateral reading, ethos, and other readings and activities.

So, to break down what this will look like:

Class period before: Your artifacts for the class to engage with are due, as well as 5 discussion questions. These are due by **Noon** so I have time to put them up before class

Class Time: All you need to do is briefly introduce the artifacts/issue to the class, as well as why you chose your issue. I will handle the discussion

Class Period After: Your reflection is due by class time

Unit Journals are due at the same time for everyone, which is Oct. 31, as well as your **Group Work Reflections**

We will complete a practice reflection, so you will know what to expect before your group presents. This will be due **Oct. 7**

Artifacts/Questions due	**Discussion Date**	**Write-Up due**
10/14	10/17	10/21
10/17	10/19	10/24
10/21	10/24	10/28
10/24	10/26	10/31

Possible places for sources: videtteonline.com, wglt.org, the Pantagraph, etc.

Point Breakdown:

Participation/Quotes and Questions (Individual): 50 pts.
Current Event Practice Reflection (Individual: 50 pts.
Source Description (Group): 50 pts.
Discussion Questions (Group): 25 pts.
Post-Discussion Write Up (Group): 100 pts.
Group Work Reflection (Individual): 25 pts.
Unit Journal (Individual): 50 pts.

Due Dates:

Practice Reflection: Oct. 7
Group Work Reflection: Oct. 31
Unit Journal: Oct. 31

UNIT POSITION STATEMENTS

Objective: To keep track of your understanding of course concepts as they evolve through the unit and course. To show your understanding of class readings and discussions, as well as how you have used these activities to build your understanding of the course and your own position in civic discourse.

Instructions:

1. If a reading has been assigned, read carefully and take note of 1 quote or concept that was noteworthy to you, and one question you have, whether for discussion or understanding-wise.
2. Regardless of whether a reading was assigned, each class will start with a free writing period, based on a question I have created. I will not read these entries, but will expect you to use the time to reflect on the question.
3. At the end of each unit, you will use these journals to write a 1 page minimum /2 page maximum statement describing your understanding of course concepts and how they relate to your larger understanding of your place in civic discourse. Each response should incorporate at least one reading and at least one other course activity or discussion.

Assessment:

These statements will be assessed based on a completion-based labor contract. For full points you must:

a. Turn in your statement on time, with the required length
b. Include 1 reading and 1 other course activity, and specifically address how they relate to your civic discourse identity
c. Discuss how the unit as a whole (based on your journals) relates to your position in civic discourse, and your view of your role in civic conversation.

Not including any of these elements will result in a decrease in your assessment, on a sliding scale (one missing element is a B, two is a C, etc).

UNIT 3: FILM REVIEW

Project Goals: To use your understanding of class terms and discussions to analyze and review a film or podcast from class based on its ability to engage with issues of civic literacy.

Project Description: For class, you will view 2 documentary films and listen to 1 podcast. Then, you will choose 1 of the 3 products and write a 2-3 page double spaced (roughly 600-1,000 word) film review analyzing the following: 1) a brief summary of the film 2) how it connects to 2 class terms, at least one of which from unit 3 (rhetorical moves, ethos, pathos, logos) and 3) Who you believe this piece would be useful for, and what it can teach us about engaging in civic literacy. Would you recommend it and why?

Project Components:

Three summaries: For each piece, you will write a 1 page double spaced summary of the piece's main argument, one piece of evidence (example/quote) you found compelling or thought provoking and why, and a question you would like to bring to discussion (50 pts. Each, 150 total)

Peer Letter: You will read the draft of a peer's project and write a 1-page peer review letter engaging with their project (25 pts.)

Draft: 25 pts.

Film Review: Described above (75 pts.)

Unit Journal: The same as other units (50 pts.)

Participation: 25 pts.

Due Dates:

Summary 1: Nov. 9

Summary 2: Nov. 16

Summary 3: Nov. 30

Draft: Dec. 5

Peer Review: Dec. 9

Final Review and Unit Journal: Dec. 16, 5 P.M.

STAKEHOLDER TREE/MAP

Directions: For part one of your unit project, you are being asked to choose three stakeholders within a community you're a part of. This activity is meant to help you identify stakeholders and begin looking at the complexities of your chosen group.

Step 1: Identify the larger group you will be analyzing. This should be the top of your tree, or the center of your map. (Ex: in class, we used "ISU" as a broad community)

Step 2: Somewhere on your page, identify the conflict you will be analyzing. This should be in the form of a statement or question. (For example, in class, we used "ISU should use proctoring software" or "Should ISU use proctoring software?") As we saw in class on 10/5, this can be deceptively tricky, so making sure that you're pinning down the central conflict is important!

Step 3: Once you've identified the conflict, you can make branches, trying to identify as many groups of people as possible. Use the stakeholder tree we made in class as an example. Remember to think about groups in lots of different ways, and keep in mind that you and others are likely part of multiple groups, whose interests might conflict.

Step 4: Once you have a complete map, pick your 3 stakeholders that you will focus on. Circle them.

Step 5: Once you've drawn your map, start to answer the following questions:

1. Who are each of these groups within the larger community?
2. Why do they care about the issue?
3. How much decision making power do they have within the group?
4. What, if any, are factors that affect their ability to advocate for themselves within the group?
5. What is your stake in this argument? What groups do you align or not align yourself with?

It is okay if you don't have full answers to these questions at this point, but these are things that you should be starting to research at this point in the project. The more completely you answer questions now, the less work you will have to do later. **Remember: you will likely have to do outside research to successfully complete this project and answer these questions.**