

LOVE, LOSS, AND WHAT I WROTE:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF PERSONAL WRITING IN A TEXTILE AND
APPAREL MANAGEMENT COURSE

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis or dissertation entitled

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I became interested in personal writing in a graduate class on rhetoric and composition theory aimed to prepare students to teach English 1000, the composition course at the University of Missouri-Columbia. When I brought in a personal writing assignment requiring students to discuss the significance of an experience in their lives, I received objections and slightly bewildered looks from my peers and professor, who seemed to perceive personal writing as the expressive, subjective, and less rigorous counterpart to more argumentative, objective academic writing.¹ In planning my course, I was referred to the English Department's English 1000 website, which states that instructors should create assignments on “subjects that invite more than one formulation, interpretation, critique, explanation, or analysis” and use “sources that extend beyond personal experience” (“English 1000”). The logic for these qualifications is that English 1000 is meant to prepare students for two writing-intensive courses in other disciplines, one lower-level course and one upper-level course in their major, where presumably the students would have to write arguments using sources “beyond” personal experience. Despite my enthusiasm for personal writing, I wondered whether the personal writing in my course was preparing students for their writing-intensive courses.

To align personal writing with the requirements of English 1000, I was going to have to find a use of the personal that was much more complex and nuanced than the typical personal essays in composition textbooks. A chapter on “Writing a Personal Essay” in Bruce Ballenger's *The Curious Writer*, for example, points out that the thesis of

¹ I refrain from defining these terms at this point, because I am speaking more generally of the popular perceptions of personal and academic writing, as opposed to what I specifically believe them to be. Thus, I am relying on the reader's preconceived notions about each term, much as my audience for the paper assignment relied on their own preconceived notions to judge its validity.

a personal essay “can be implicit” and that the personal essay “places the writer at center stage” (96, 93). I wanted to use personal writing that opened out to include its audience, making an argument was as explicit as any academic research paper. An assignment prompt suggested in the anthology *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition* proudly proclaims that it “provides a bridge from personal narratives to formal exposition, to research and to writing with sources—while retaining the motivational value of personal writing” (Roen et al. 151), as though once the student has rid herself of personal writing, she will be an accomplished academic writer. But I wanted to juxtapose personal writing with academic writing; I was less interested in the disjuncture between personal and academic writing and more interested in the fluidity of the relationship between the two.

I researched how personal experience could be used in more sophisticated ways – alongside or in conjunction with academic writing, and for an audience. In *Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*, Candace Spigelman uses the phrase “personal academic discourse” (3). Spigelman's “personal academic argument” works in two ways. One way is to “incorporate more academic conventions of paraphrase and quotation into personal essays,” meaning that the writer contributes to the argument of her experience with outside sources, encouraging students to see themselves as part of larger social or cultural processes (Spigelman 113). The second way of integrating the personal and the academic is by starting from the academic, such as attacking or defending an academic argument using personal experience. This assignment gives the student agency by having her articulate her separation from social forces, teaches “a process of knowing” instead of “a body of knowledge,” and allows the student to

“translate public knowledge into personal meaning” (Spigelman 164).

Wendy Hesford takes a similarly complex view of personal writing. In *Framing Identities: Autobiography and the Politics of Pedagogy*, urges teachers to “help students locate personal experience in historical and social contexts” (49). Hesford views autobiography less as an isolated incident (as the traditional personal essay above might suggest) and more as “negotiation” or “mediation” between the individual and their culture, history, and discourse (17-18). Hesford places herself in opposition to the traditional view of personal writing as “expressive,” meaning that it serves only as a true and/or chronological record of experience. Rather, Hesford shows how the critical use of autobiography, focusing on what she calls “frames” or contexts of experience, can be a tool of empowerment (xxiii). As an example, she interprets one of her family photographs, combining the impressions from her own constructed gaze with the historical context of the photo itself.

In both of these works, I saw an exciting place for the personal in student writing. Both give meaning to the personal by interrogating its construction, and both use personal writing for meaningful ends: Spigelman uses personal experience as evidence, and Hesford uses autobiographical texts as sites for inquiry. Both rely on a view of the personal as a rhetorical construction, though Spigelman focuses more on the way that personal narrative and experience affect academic arguments, while Hesford is primarily concerned with identifying the referents that give rise to narratives.

While both these views of personal writing were compelling for the field of composition studies, I wanted to determine if these sophisticated uses of personal writing were happening in places besides composition classrooms, in writing in other disciplines.

In the spring of 2006, I researched the syllabi and assignment sheets in the archives of the University of Missouri's Campus Writing Program to find writing-intensive classes that used personal writing. I contacted and interviewed seven professors who taught such classes, hoping to find someone who viewed the personal in the similar ways as Spigelman and Hesford. I found a course in Textile and Apparel Management (TAM) entitled "Social Appearance in Time and Space," aimed to show students the social, cultural, and historical constructions of dress. The class is composed of a twice weekly 50-minute lecture and a once weekly 50-minute discussion section. Instead of simply freewriting or journaling, Dr. Laurel Wilson,² who has taught the course for ten years, asks her students to blend personal experience with academic writing. The class involves one assignment that is strictly personal, and three subsequent assignments that blend personal and academic writing. The assignment sheets can be found in the appendices. The assignments are:

1. **The I Believe Statement** (see Appendix A). Students write a one-page statement of what Wilson calls "a person's core beliefs," which each student reads aloud on the first day of the discussion section.
2. **The T-Shirt Project** (see Appendix B). Students select a T-shirt that has personal significance to them. They bring the shirt to the discussion section, and share the story of the shirt with the class. While listening to the presentations, the other students record the name of the student, a description of the shirt, and (according to the assignment sheet) "some themes that emerge from the 'telling.'" Using this

² Dr. Wilson read the final version of this project and graciously allowed me to use her real name. All other names are pseudonyms, and the interviewees themselves chose most of the pseudonyms.

information as well as a scholarly article about the social significance of T-shirts, they write a paper that describes what they did, the emergent themes, and conclusions from their observations.

3. **The Love, Loss, and What I Wore Project** (see Appendix C). This assignment is based on a book entitled *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*, written and illustrated by Ilene Beckerman. She chronicles major events in her life through illustrations and stories of the clothing she was wearing at the time. The students create their own book of ten garments. Each page includes a drawing or picture, as well as a story about the garment. The students write an accompanying essay about the historical, social, and cultural context of five of the garments, using a variety of primary and secondary sources.
4. **The Diversity Project** (see Appendix D). Students choose someone to interview who is “generationally or ethnically different” from them. They select two articles from academic journals about the dress of that ethnic or age group, and one secondary source to understand the culture of the interviewee. Using this information, they generate interview questions, and compare the results of their interview with the findings in the articles.

In addition to the personal components described above, the final section of the third and fourth papers asks students to reflect on their process of completing the project: what they learned, what they might have done differently, and how their feelings about the project changed from when they first started.

Although my literature review and methodology sections elaborate more fully on my decision to use ethnographic methods, here I want to note that I was attracted to

ethnography because it posed the types of questions I wanted to answer. Most helpful to the process of evolving my research questions was the classification scheme for questions in qualitative research, as laid out in Lofland et al. (148-149). These questions also helped to structure the Analysis section of this study.

Research Questions

Questions of Type. Lofland et al. define these kinds of questions as “What is this an instance of? What type of some previously identified unit or aspect is it?”(148). I begin with the Questions of Type because they are teacher-oriented: how does the teacher define personal writing and thinking through her class, her assignments, and her grading? I chose to study this class because it was a certain type of class (writing-intensive, writing-in-the-discipline) that uses a certain type of writing (personal writing). As I believed that writing was a way of thinking, and that the purpose of a writing-intensive course is less to teach students to write and more to teach students to think, I was also interested in the type of thinking required in the course, particularly in relation to personal writing. My questions of type became:

- 1) How is this type of writing defined and practiced in this type of class?
- 2) How does this type of writing blend with other “types” of writing, such as academic writing, research writing, and argumentative writing?
- 3) What type of thinking does personal writing encourage?

Questions of Consequences. Although Lofland et al. caution researchers against jumping to conclusions about consequentialness (163), and although this study did not cover enough time to determine with any certainty the long-term effects of personal writing, I was interested in the more immediate effects, or what I call “responses

and reactions” to personal writing. I place this section after the questions of type to invite comparisons of the teacher’s ideas with the students’, and to investigate how the students respond to what the teacher is trying to do. I asked:

- 1) What do students think about the use of personal writing in the course?
- 2) How do students respond to the personal nature of each writing assignment? How do they address the assignment?

Questions of Magnitude. These are defined as questions of "strength, intensity, size" (151). The Questions of Magnitude follow next because they focus and specify students’ responses with regard to particular problem areas. Walvoord and McCarthy, pioneering ethnographic researchers in WAC, focused a large part of their study on “difficulties” in the belief that learning “often grows out of the difficulties of struggle and failure” (5). I wanted to know:

- 1) What writing assignments (or parts of writing assignments) are most difficult and require the most effort?
- 2) How do the teachers define and address those difficulties?
- 3) How does personal writing cause, effect, or alleviate these difficulties?

Questions of Causes. Lofland et al. caution against making hasty conclusions about causality (157), but I do want to speculate about why students viewed personal writing the way they did. I save these questions, which address why things happened, for the end so that the reader may understand the full scope of the class to facilitate thorough reflection. Although I do not have all the answers to the problems in student writing, I discuss some possible explanations for the behaviors I observe. I also hope to give voice to some of the students’ and teachers’ explanations for how they

approached the assignments and why they encountered difficulties. My questions of causes are:

- 1) What causes the students to think about personal writing in this manner?
- 2) What causes their difficulties in writing?

I begin with a literature review that carves out a place for my study in composition ethnography and writing across the curriculum (or WAC). In the methodology section, I explain my choices to use ethnography and my practices of interviewing and observation as well as my process of analysis. My analysis section is divided into four parts that answer the questions described above. First, I illustrate Dr. Wilson's beliefs about personal writing as expressed in our interviews and link those ideas to similar views of writing advocated by Candace Spigelman and Wendy Hesford. By tracing the changing definition of the personal through the writing assignments and by examining the way Dr. Wilson evaluated papers, I show how she used personal writing to teach a way of thinking in her discipline, pushing the students towards the critical thinking necessary for careers in textile and apparel management.

The second section of analysis illuminates the students' "responses and reactions" to personal writing, both negative and positive, first from interviews and then from the writing itself. Students enjoy personal writing, but do not always understand why it is important, and tend to see the academic writing as an imposition on personal writing. The writing itself reveals that sometimes students lapse into clichés when faced with a personal writing task. I suggest that the assignments bring out what Hesford calls the students' "conflicting identities," asking them to write and think from multiple positions,

which leads to the use of cliché and trouble negotiating the use of the “I” pronoun. In blending the personal and the academic in this assignment, students are able to adopt the position of a genuine researcher, gain self-awareness, and acquire a sense of their own constructedness.

In the third section, I discuss how the students had the greatest difficulty with making choices about personal information and conducting research. I offer some possible explanations for these difficulties in this section, including inflexibility in choosing research topics, creating overly specific search terms that narrowed the search, and doing the assignment in reverse. I believe that the students needed to know how to select stories to research, to understand the flexibility of personal writing, and needed more guidance in regard to crafting a thesis statement.

In the fourth section, I use William Perry's *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years* and *Women's Ways of Knowing* by Belenky et al. to offer some explanations for students' reactions to the writing and thinking required in the course. I point to some of the more obvious ways that the students in this study fit the schemes laid out by these authors to offer the students' cognitive development as a potential explanation for their problems in personal writing. The cognitive development scheme shows how personal writing can be intellectually challenging for students, but also how it can move them to higher levels of development.

In my conclusion, I explain how the assignments in the class alleviated many of the common problems associated with personal writing. I discuss several shortcomings of the class: the students' lack of understanding about the functions of personal writing and the way their identities conflicted with the academic materials. I also explore further

avenues for research in the field of writing across the curriculum and this class in particular.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is significant to composition studies in its combination of three characteristics: (1) a focus on WAC (2) an attention to a specific kind of reflexive, critical, personal writing (3) an ethnographic nature. In this section, I first review the way composition studies has come to see the personal, contextualizing the above discussion of the works by Spigelman and Hesford. I contrast this sophisticated view with the relatively simplistic view of personal writing – primarily journaling – in the literature in writing across the curriculum. I show some assignments from the field of sociology that ask for rhetorical moves similar to those of the personal academic argument. I show that the literature on personal writing in WAC has been focused on teaching essays about how to implement certain practices, none of which have been empirically studied, and that ethnographic WAC studies have only peripherally focused on personal writing. Finally, I make the case that an ethnographic study will serve to illuminate the practice of personal writing in WAC, in line with the possibilities of the personal as articulated in composition studies, not only to publicize the work being done in the field but also to serve as a first step for creating definitions for the types of writing present in WAC. Ultimately, I hope to illuminate a productive and mutually beneficial link between composition, personal writing, and writing across the curriculum.

Recently, Spigelman, Hesford, and others have substantially altered the traditional, expressivist view of personal writing as a “true” representation of experience, and have argued for the role of the self in academic argument, mostly because, as William P. Banks says, “it is impossible to separate the producer from the text” (33). Academic discourse is a poor disguise for the complex human being behind the writing.

Alan W. France says that part of writing effectively is having “a sense of self and how you’ve been constructed by culture” (149). For any writer, the echo of an “I” voice allows for “audience identification” through the location of a common ground in the discourse, and enables the writer to illustrate practically philosophic principles (Spigelman 51, 60).

This new conceptualization of personal writing argues that spotlighting a student’s life experience alongside conventions of academic discourse validates the student’s experience and promotes the idea that writing can be for the writer. And yet, by requiring academic language and self-reflection, the student has the means to open the essay outward to show its social and cultural constructions, thereby allowing her to discover, as Evan Carton says, an “engaged and reflective selfhood” (344). Giving students an academic text to argue for or against using their experience allows for the writerly choice of what information and evidence to use and the teacherly choice of topic and scope. Linda Brodkey's literacy autoethnography as described in *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only* provides one example of a personal academic argument because students “cast their personal experience in a cultural frame” (210). Students use a narrative of their own literacy growing up to examine how they were shaped by cultural forces. Brodkey argues that this autoethnography allows students to see their larger social and cultural constructions while developing analytical and critical skills (210).

Despite these intriguing uses of personal writing in composition studies, the primary means by which WAC has examined personal writing is through the use of journals. For example, scholars have written on the use of journaling in a variety of fields such as nursing (Johnson), business (Coffinberger), mathematics (Abel; Mett),

engineering (Selfe), geology (Stanesco) and even a vocational course in “unarmed defense tactics” (Nichols). These journals, however, usually represent personal writing as informal, and supplemental or transitional to academic writing – a stark contrast to the nuanced, reflexive, and formalized writing advocated by the composition scholars described above. Toby Fulwiler's *The Journal Book* and John Bean's *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, both aimed towards teachers of writing in the disciplines, do not name a specific place for personal writing or classify journals in terms of the amount of personal writing.

The personal academic argument was similar to a concept from sociology called the “sociological imagination,” a term coined by C. Wright Mills in 1969 to refer to making connections between one’s personal life and social forces. Several pedagogical articles published in *Teaching Sociology* demonstrate assignments that make productive connections between the personal and the academic. In “The Educational Storytelling Project: Approaches in Cross-Curricular Learning,” Jacobs et al. discuss students' narrative “ghost stories,” where students write about how social forces like race, gender and class that inform their everyday lives, and the ability of these stories “to actively shape student learning” in composition, sociology, and literature courses (51). Rosemary F. Powers' “Using Critical Autobiography to Teach the Sociology of Education,” describes an assignment that asks students to use their sociological imagination to discover how major events in educational reform have shaped their lives. Powers believes “autobiography – critically considered – can provide a way for students to interpret their remembered lives in a broader context” and help them “reflect on the

broader structural questions posed by a sociology of education” (198). In “Teaching the Sociology of Religion: The Student’s Religious Autobiography,” Larry C. Ingram writes of an assignment that asks students to write a personal history of their religious (or non-religious) life, examining the social influences of family, friends, and schooling. Ingram writes that the autobiography helps them in “bridging the gap between sociological generalization and personal experience” (167).

The accounts of journaling and the sociological imagination assignments, however, typically discuss the execution of the assignments to assist other teachers in carrying out similar exercises. They offer specific assignments that teachers can put directly into practice, as opposed to studying a specific class to examine students' responses. These articles are not ethnographic in nature, and show student responses only through quantitative surveys or anecdotal support.

Two studies of classes in different disciplines hint at the role of the personal in writing across the curriculum, but do not specifically study student responses to personal academic writing. In *Thinking and Writing in College*, Walvoord and McCarthy, along with four other teacher-researchers, studied four classrooms in four disciplines and three institutions, focusing particularly on “roles” and “difficulties” in the classroom. One area of difficulty identified in all four classrooms and relevant here is the problem of “constructing the audience and self” (231). The study illustrates how the teachers in the disciplines desire the students to adopt the role of “professional-in-training,” meaning that they want the students to think and write like a professional in the discipline (232). The study concludes that students had difficulties determining what audience to write for and how to present themselves to that audience. Although primarily focused on

performance and writing, Fishman et al. discuss the presence of "self-reflexive writing" in a five-year study at Stanford University, and identify it as the kind of writing students did most often outside of class. Their student interviewees identify self-reflexive writing as experience-based, unstructured, and writing over which they claimed ownership (228). Still, Fishman et al. present this type of personal writing as a refuge from (as opposed to a part of) academic writing: "Frustrated by busy work as well as the struggle to become part of different disciplinary discourse communities, students find themselves deeply engaged in and satisfied by self-sponsored writing" (228).

As illustrated above, personal writing in composition studies has taken a dynamic turn towards investigating the social and historical construction of the self, but the role of the personal in writing across the curriculum has been limited to teaching essays about using journals or tangential mentions of "voice" and "audience" in studies primarily focused on other aspects of student writing. This leaves a gap for ethnographic studies on the use of the personal academic arguments in writing-intensive classes in disciplines besides composition.

Though my next section makes the case that ethnography will facilitate a fair and coherent representation of the class, here I want to point out how ethnography adds to the scholarly conversation about personal writing and writing across the curriculum. First, as Chris Anson noted in 1993, "we have not yet created a functional taxonomy of writing in different disciplines; nor have we studied differences in the characteristics of written discourse which are given functional labels in these disciplines" ("Introduction" xvii). Anson argues that without such a taxonomy, it's difficult to see how a teacher correlates the mode of writing with a specific purpose, and he recommends pursuing "alternative

kinds of research models, such as ethnographies” to determine the difference (xvii).

Throughout this study, and in my first section in particular, I hope to tease out the nature of the personal writing I was observing to redefine personal in the context of this classroom.

Furthermore, I found that when talking about my research with others, they were surprised to hear of such an intriguing use of the personal in (of all places) a textile and apparel management class. Linda Brodkey writes that “ethnography attempts to bring stories not yet heard to the attention of the academy” (“Writing” 48), and I believe that the progressive uses of personal writing in this class certainly qualifies as one such story. Just from the handful of writing-intensive classes I examined in the pilot study for this project, I discovered that personal writing was being implemented across the curriculum in more creative and relevant ways than I ever could have imagined. I saw personal writing blended with research papers, expanded into journals, published, juxtaposed with textbook material, and employed as a stepping-stone to engage students with course concepts. If writing across the curriculum programs are to be sustained and lauded, ethnographies can be excellent “PR,” so to speak, for the professors that work so hard to integrate writing into their classrooms. I will count this project as a success if it draws attention to the fascinating ways in which writing is used in places besides composition classrooms.

In this section, I have shown how the usefulness of my study arises out of the close attention to these personal academic assignments through interviews and careful examination of the classroom practices and the writing produced. Ethnography allows me to give sustained attention to the uses of writing in the classroom, not just to publicize the

writing assignments (like the teaching essays mentioned above) but to examine how the students respond to them – through interviews and in their writing. I am able to see a full picture of the classroom – the student-teacher interaction, the structure of the class, the execution of the assignments. This is not to say that this project shows things “as they really are,” but rather ethnography is important because it provides a close examination of a relevant usage of a contemporary type of writing. In my next section, I offer further explanation for my choice of ethnography, specifically in the way it relates to personal writing and discuss the other ethnographic methods present in my work.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this section, I outline and justify the methods I used to conduct this study. I begin by showing how ethnography made sense as a means of studying personal writing because “the personal is with us” in the creation of ethnography. I show how the rhetoric of ethnography is linked to personal writing, particularly in the use of authorial voice and stories. I discuss some of the problems with the personal in ethnography and how I plan to restrict my own story in this ethnography to address those problems, while still making it self-reflective enough to open up my methods to scrutiny. Ultimately, I use ethnography as a way to show personal writing as an intellectually rigorous activity, and challenge for me personally. Then, I discuss the different ethnographic methods I used: observation, interviews, reading student writing, and my strategies for analysis.

Ethnography as a Research Method

In a discussion of the occasions for qualitative research, Lofland et al. show how many qualitative studies concern “recurring and often routine practices” that are “interrupted or called into question by self or others because we have done them wrong or in a way that others find objectionable or noteworthy, and we therefore are required to account for our action” (123). The impression of the composition program was that the “routine” writing practices of writing-intensive classes involved traditional academic essays with an argumentative thesis and research-based support. I chose an ethnographic project to account for the “disruption” so to speak, of personal writing in these classes.

Wendy Bishop calls ethnography “the study of human consciousness in everyday life” (“Perils” 263). Though studies vary greatly in their use of methods, most ethnographies employ two or more methods: interviews, observation, thick description,

fieldnotes, and recursive analysis (Bishop *Ethnographic* 18). The social nature of classroom observation and the interaction of interviewing students and teachers about writing has made ethnography a popular choice among those in composition studies interested in what actually happens in classrooms. Ethnography seems to tap into composition's practical side; I know I was certainly more excited about talking to students and reading their writing than spending long hours in library stacks. Books like *Voices and Visions: Refiguring Ethnography in Composition* (Kirklighter et al.) and Bishop's *Ethnographic Writing Research* discuss what ethnography means in literacy studies, while others like *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies in Literacy* (Mortenson and Kirsch) examine the complicated ethics of such ethnographies.

I personally was attracted to ethnography not only because of its interactive nature but because I saw the way it was linked to personal writing. For example, the process of creating ethnography as well as deciding what to focus one's attention on often relies on the researcher's experience. Lofland et al. give multiple examples of famous fieldstudies and how their respective researchers became interested in the topics. Lawrence J. Ouellet's *Pedal to the Metal: The Work Lives of Truck Drivers* came about because he worked as a truck driver while in graduate school (11). Diane Vaughan's *Uncoupling: Turning Points in Intimate Relationships* came out of her own divorce after 20 years of marriage (11). In this way, the personal interests of the ethnographer contributes to the research questions and design of the study, resulting in "necessary meaningful linkages between the personal and emotional on the one hand, and the stringent intellectual operations to come on the other" (Lofland et al. 13). This was certainly true for me; my experience in learning about composition pedagogy as well as teaching itself created the

research questions I wanted to pursue. Ethnography is also linked to the personal because the researcher must often trust her instincts when sifting through stacks of data, valuing impressions and following inclinations to know what's important. *Analyzing Social Settings* continually reminded me to write down my “personal” and “emotional” experiences, in both interviews and fieldnotes, because these would be important later on for interpreting my data (Lofland et al. 104, 113).

Many in rhetoric and composition have written on the significance of the personal in the rhetoric of ethnography, and I believed that the most effective way to represent personal writing was by using a research method that rhetorically made good use of it. In his study of the rhetoric of ethnography, Robert Brooke writes that ethnographic research leads the reader to “rely on and question the categories we use to think, the choices we make about which categories to follow, and the selves we become as we try to explain to others what we've learned” (23). Brenda Jo Brueggemann says that in the process of ethnography, “rhetoric, politics, and the personal are very much with us” in the multitude of choices about representation of the self and others (19). Ethnography makes use of narrative structure as a rhetorical tool, both for the people in the study and the researcher herself. Linda Brodkey writes that stories figure into ethnography because they represent “the terms on which others make sense of their lives” (“Writing” 47). The researcher crafts a narrative to tell the story of the project, thereby illuminating the process of his or her research.

Voice is also an important rhetorical tool in writing ethnography, and much of the literature on the ethics of ethnography involve questions about the ethnographer's stance from which she writes up her research. Wendy Bishop urges ethnographers to “construct

an authorial voice that can adequately tell research stories” in order to write about their process of researching, writing, and knowing and open up those processes for critique (“I-Witnessing” 152). An ethnography with an authorial voice allows the author to create a persona, thus adding transparency to the process of the research and another lens through which to view it. Blakeslee et al., however, problematize the concept of voice in a discussion of their study of the rhetoric of a group of prestigious physicists. They draw on feminist and postmodern ideas to construct a “collaborative” and “cooperative” voice (136), which balances the researcher's interpretive frameworks and analysis with the participant's voices, and solicits the participants' feedback on the researchers' analysis.

Participants' objections to the researchers' authority, however, are only part of the slippery slope of the self in ethnography. Researchers can fall into a confessional mode, as Fontana and Frey somewhat pejoratively put it: “a soul cleansing . . . of problematic feelings and sticky situations in the field” (372). Gwen Gorzelsky makes the point that the trope of story and narrative are seen as less objective and less scientific, thus detracting from the legitimacy of the study (61). Robert Brooke points out that ethnography is often viewed in contrast to other, more scientific methods (12) – not unlike the way personal writing is often contrasted to other, more scientific writing styles. Brenda Jo Brueggemann warns that “self-reflexivity . . . risks turning representation into a solipsistic, rhetorical position in which the researcher (the self) . . . usurps the position of the subject (the other)” (19).

In light of these objections, I believe that this study should only be about me in as much as I need to reflect on my practices and my position because one of my goals in this project is to become a better researcher and writer for my next project – a goal that will

be helped by adopting a reflective stance. At the same time, I am conscious of the possibility that such reflection can make the ethnography about the ethnographer. In the Methodology and the Conclusion, I depict my research process and my thinking, in the hope that it will open up my methods and findings for alternate interpretations, but in the Analysis section I foreground my participants.

Furthermore, Spigelman, Hesford, and others who study the role of the personal in composition studies aim to show how the personal is more than simply “what I think” or “what I feel” or “what happened to me one day.” They believe in the power, complexity, layeredness, and the rhetoric of the personal. To omit my personal story from this study in the hopes of making it sound more “scientific” would run counter to all they have written; it is thus a risk I have to take. One of my early goals in doing this project was to show that personal writing was every bit as challenging as the traditional “academic” papers, whether assigned in a composition course, or as a component of a master's thesis. I hope that this project will show the way that my own “personal writing,” as evinced in the authorial voice and representation of my experience crafting this project, can be used to craft a rigorous and intellectually rewarding work.

Even so, much of the talk about the “personal” in ethnography relates to the “person” of the ethnographer, as opposed to the “person” of the participants. Because my research questions concerned a kind of *writing* as opposed to certain people or groups of people, I often had to omit the backgrounds and stories of my individual interviewees in favor of discussing their written work; in a way, I was favoring their academic work over their personal lives. In “Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?” Judith Stacey articulates the double-edge of ethnographic authority and voice: “it is the researcher who narrates,

who 'authors' the ethnography . . . In the last instance an ethnography is a written document structured primarily by a researcher's purposes, offering a researcher's interpretations, registered in a researcher's voice" (23). In the future, I might consider a study that allows my participants' stories to guide project; perhaps one similar to Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater's *Academic Literacies*, which represents the "literate lives" of two individual students. Chiseri-Strater allows their stories to structure the study, and begins with their experience to lead to her conclusions. I might also consider a study such as "Cross-Curricular Underlife." In this study, a composition teacher asked her honors composition students to write essays about how her course affected their writing and learning in subsequent courses. Allowing the students themselves to write the stories of their journeys beyond the composition classroom would also be one way of solving this ethical dilemma.

In addition to its rhetorical use of the personal, ethnography places an emphasis on the understanding of lived experience, making it similar to the course I was studying. The course was subtitled "Social Appearance in Time and Space," and one of the course goals stated in the syllabus was that students would "Recognize the terminology used for discussing world culture and history in relation to dress." Dr. Wilson stated that her goal for the semester was "To communicate the best I can about how culture affects what we wear" (Int. 1). The writing assignments focused largely on understanding the relationship between dress and culture, and I demonstrate that ethnography, which also grapples with questions of culture and influence, is an effective means to understand the class. As I show in my findings, even some of the research the students were doing looked like the work I was doing to study them, likely a result of

both of us trying to understand a cultural experience.

Finally, what was good for me personally about conducting an ethnography was that it wouldn't let me be "right." When I had originally researched a paper on personal writing for a graduate seminar, I simply looked up the sources that agreed with me. I read, and understood, and then ignored the objections. For example, in a September 2001 issue of *College English* devoted to personal writing, it was quite easy to focus on Candace Spigelman's and Jane E. Hindman's elegant arguments for the personal in academic discourse, and to ignore the preceding section of articles by Anne Ruggles Gere, Deborah Brandt, Ellen Cushman and others expressing their frustration and cautions about personal writing. This denial of the dissenting opinion, however, became more difficult when a student was sitting in front of me saying something like, "This paper was totally pointless and I hated it." It was even harder when I was reading stacks of papers that *didn't* use the personal in intellectually rigorous ways, such as students who resorted to clichés like "Clothing makes us who we are" to express what they had learned in their writing assignments. It was also hard to stand by the personal academic argument when students complained that published research was an unwelcome imposition on the personal meaning of their clothes, or when I could see how they struggled in their writing to use the "I" pronoun. *This* data proved difficult to ignore, and when confronted with it, I had to acknowledge it and account for it, as I do in my analysis sections below. It forced me to seriously consider how I was going to conceive of these problems and how I was going to let them change the way I was thinking about personal writing. I chose not to see difficulties (the students' or my own) as barriers. Walvoord and McCarthy chose specifically to study difficulties because doing so helped them

understand the way students were learning (5).

Classroom Observation

Writing ethnographies tend to focus on the student-produced text that emerges from a given classroom situation. To increase my legitimacy, I wanted to triangulate what I was reading in the students' papers with what was happening in the classroom. This way, I could know all the information that the students would know going into the paper – what Adler and Adler call “the phenomenological complexity of the world” (378). I chose to do a significant amount of observation because ethnographic research gains credibility to the degree that the researcher spends time in the field (Bishop *Ethnographic* 38). Although I did not realize this at the beginning of the project, classroom observation would become essential for comparing my interpretations of what was happening in the class with what my student interviewees reported.

In addition to a twice-weekly lecture, the class is composed of seven discussion sections of 20-25 students, led by three teaching assistants and one professor. I chose to observe two discussion sections, one at 11 a.m. Tuesday mornings led by the professor, and one at 11 a.m. Thursday mornings led by the TA, “Rebecca.” I chose to observe the work of a teaching assistant as well as the discussion section of the professor primarily for triangulation purposes, because Adler and Adler also note that observation increases in reliability when observations occur at different times and places (381). I thought that observing the professor would be valuable as she created all the writing assignments and had been teaching the class for ten years. Observing the teaching assistant as well would give me an idea of how the class went with a less experienced teacher as well as someone who had not originally conceived of the assignments. The professor informed me that the

lectures for the class did not pertain specifically to the writing assignments (something several of my interviewees would complain about as the semester went on), and so I chose not to observe those. It would also have been interesting to observe more than two discussion sections, but this was not feasible within my time limits.

I also had the opportunity to observe the weekly meetings of the professor and her teaching assistants. These meetings, required for writing-intensive professors, are aimed to assist the professor in mentoring the graduate teaching assistants. The meetings took place on Tuesday afternoons and usually lasted 20-40 minutes. I chose to observe the meetings because I wanted to hear how the instructors³ talked about their students and their writing, as well as what problems or successes they had throughout the semester. This was helpful because I could get the teachers' opinions about how the course was going without having to interview them every week.

On the first day of the classes, I passed out consent forms granting me permission to be in the classroom and record what I saw and heard as well as to read and use all the writing in the class. My plan was only to sit in on the class; I felt that I was asking enough of the professor and teaching assistant to sit in on their classes, interview them and their students, and read their student writing, and I did not want to intrude any more than necessary. Although I am 24 years old at the time of this writing, I could probably pass for as young as 17 or 18. I did not make an effort to “dress up” or look older in any way for the class, which was primarily female. For all intents and purposes, I was indistinguishable from the other students. Occasionally, especially during the latter half

³ I use the term “instructors” and “teachers” to refer to the professor and the graduate teaching assistants collectively.

of the semester, a student would ask me about a homework assignment, or in one case, why I hadn't done it, which indicates to me that I blended into the classroom. In the TA meetings, I was more noticeable. Rebecca would refer to the Thursday discussion section I sat in on as “our section,” and would occasionally look to me for validation or for an answer about something that had happened during the section.

Interviews with Students and Instructors

Along with collecting student writing and observing the discussion section, I triangulated my data by conducting interviews. Over the course of the semester, I did three sets of interviews with five students in two of the discussion sections (two students in Rebecca's section and three in Dr. Wilson's). I found my interviewees by giving a brief speech on the first day of class. I explained my project and passed out consent forms allowing me to sit in on the class and read the students' writing. I asked for three students to volunteer to be interviewed for each class, and I received exactly that many volunteers. As it turned out, I was very fortunate in that all three from Dr. Wilson's section came to every interview. One student in Rebecca's section originally told me she could participate, but then missed our first meeting and emailed me to say she was too busy that semester and couldn't do it after all. So I had only two students from that section, both of whom came to their interviews faithfully. I paid the students \$15 for three interviews, each of which lasted between 20 minutes and an hour.

My first round of student interviews, which happened the first week of school, consisted of questions regarding their previous writing experiences and their expectations for the course. The second interviews, at the midpoint of the semester, asked specific questions about the composing process of the T-shirt Project and how they were feeling

about the class so far. The third interviews, near the final week of the semester, asked about the process of the Love, Loss, and What I Wore and the Diversity Projects, and asked them to reflect on the entire semester. Throughout, I tried to ask open-ended questions that I thought a writing teaching might ask: How did this paper go for you? What was easy and what was difficult? Can you talk about your process of writing this paper?

I chose what Fontana and Frey refer to as “unstructured” interviewing, where the researcher is trying to “understand the complex behavior of members of a society without imposing any *a priori* categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (366). The particular emphasis here is on “the desire to *understand* rather than *explain*" (366). I wanted to understand the students' writing process, rather than explain why they were getting certain grades or revert to the refrain of “what's wrong with student writing” and its accompanying cure-all. This method allowed (or perhaps forced) me to listen to student complaints as well as praise. I was coming into the project with the mentality that personal writing had positive effects, but I wanted to be open to the possibility that it didn't.

I interviewed Rebecca and Dr. Wilson at the same intervals throughout the semester. I asked them to reflect on their teaching philosophies, how they felt the course was going, grading practices, and trends and issues in the students' writing. I asked them to talk about problems with grading, and what they thought the students were doing well. I also asked them to compare the current students to the students of previous years. These interviews took 25-45 minutes each.

In every interview, I tried to adopt what Fontana and Frey term “a style of

'interested listening' that rewards the respondent's participation but does not evaluate the responses" (364). But Thomas Newkirk, discussing the ethical complications of this interviewing style, points out that this is an inherently deceptive stance because I *am* evaluating their responses (7). Newkirk recommends that the researcher allow subjects to "respond to problematical situations" in the data-gathering phase (11), which I tried to do by asking the students and teachers their opinions on, for example, the problems students were having with researching for the second and third papers. I was rewarded in this, as they often provided explanations I hadn't considered.

I also believe that it is unlikely that an ethnographic writing researcher could solely rely on student interviews for accurate ideas about student writing. I found that students were inarticulate in discussing their writing, especially their composing process. Lofland et al. argue that the qualitative researcher "is one who . . . is 'ignorant' and needs to be 'taught'" (69), and suggest adopting such a stance so as the interviewee or participants will be more likely to open up. I tried this, usually using the prompt "Why was that?", but most of the time I got an even more vague answer or an "I don't know, I'm just like that." I see now why many ethnographers choose to have students keep writing logs or record think-aloud tapes to record their writing processes. I believe that these methods would have made the students more reflective and more articulate. Also, due to scheduling conflicts, it was sometimes as much as two weeks after an assignment was due that I was able to interview a student; the writing logs could have been composed when the assignment was on the forefront of the students' minds.

Often, ethnographic researchers studying classrooms identify most strongly with the teacher. I, however, found it easy to "adapt to the world" of the student interviewees

because it was my world as well (Fontana and Frey 371). The student interviewees were not that much younger than me (on average only two or three years) and are white, middle-class, college-educated females. When they talked about the fashion trends or popular culture from their younger years, I could relate (which was especially helpful given the class' focus on culture). The teaching assistants too were very near to me in age. So although I was a researcher-outsider to the class, I found it easier to identify with the students and the TA's rather than the professor.

Writing Assignments

I chose to collect only the larger writing assignments, which altogether constituted approximately 70% of the students' grades. In addition to the three main writing projects, the students did worksheets and in-class writing assignments about the lecture material. In this way, it wasn't entirely true that the lectures did not pertain to the writing assignments. The lectures pertained to worksheets, in total worth about 15% of their grade, which the students completed outside of class and brought to their discussion sections. Although the worksheets occasionally asked students to relate a course concept to their experience, they did not require the unique blend of personal writing and academic writing as did the larger projects. Also, collecting the homework from the teachers between the time that they were handed in and graded would have been a great logistical difficulty. As it was, I collected and copied the graded drafts of the three main projects from the professor and the TA, before they handed them back to the students.

- For the T-shirt Project, I copied the graph the students used for data analysis, a first draft of the paper that was brought in for a peer review day, the peer reviewer's analysis of the paper, and the final submission of the paper with the

cover sheet consisting of the grading rubric and a grade. The sheet the peer reviewer used to review the paper was the same sheet that the teacher used to grade the paper – a rubric laying out the point values for different parts of the paper.

- For the Love, Loss, and What I Wore Project, I collected and photocopied (and sometimes photographed) the book the students created, the accompanying paper for the book in first draft, the peer reviewer's analysis, and the final submission with grading rubric and grade. Again, the sheet the peer reviewer used to review the paper was the same sheet that the teacher used to grade the paper.
- There was no peer review for the Diversity Project, so I only collected the final graded submissions.

Analysis Strategies

I began with a rudimentary coding system, where I simply highlighted important sections of fieldnotes and transcripts and then wrote a theme in the margin. I knew I was looking for talk about personal writing and researching, so those were codes from the start. As the semester went on, I began to notice trends in the classroom: telling stories, making conceptual and personal connections to course material, and using student experience to teach an idea. Trends emerged in the student interviews as well: self-evaluation, complaining, discussions of the length of writing assignments, finding inspiration to write, organizing a paper, the frustrations of research, what was hard and what was easy. For the teachers: grading practices, teaching philosophies, shifting priorities between life and work, puzzling over curious student behavior. I coded as I went along during the semester, but didn't go back and re-code if I invented a new code

partway through the semester. Essentially, I coded by looking at my data and asking, “Of what is this an instance?”

At the beginning of my analysis stage once the class was over, I used the Qualrus qualitative analysis program to organize my data. First, I created a list of all the codes I wanted to use. Then, I uploaded the interview transcripts and my fieldnotes into the program and highlighted certain sections, clicking on them to link them to a specific code. While in the writing phase of my research, I could simply click on a code and the program would bring up all its occurrences in all my data. To enter the data into the program, I had to re-code everything. Because I don't have a co-researcher, I hope that this can serve as a check to the validity of my coding scheme. An example of a coded section of one of my interviews can be found in Appendix E, and an example of coded fieldnotes can be found in Appendix F.

I read each student paper multiple times in groups by teacher, to locate trends and similarities, paying specific attention to the way the students represented themselves and how their thinking came across on the page. Keeping in mind Hesford's idea of conflict between students' multiple identities, I wanted to see how they negotiated between personal and academic writing, and where they seemed to struggle and where they succeeded, highlighting and annotating representative samples of each. In my next section, I relay the results of this analysis. Each section of analysis corresponds with a research question as outlined in the Introduction. Through my analysis, I discovered the ways that the professor was using personal writing to teach a way of thinking, how the students responded to the writing.

IV. ANALYSIS

Types of Writing and Thinking

I begin by addressing my question as to the type of thinking present in the class. I illustrate Dr. Wilson's beliefs about personal writing, and how she used personal writing to teach a way of thinking in her discipline, specifically getting students to think like marketers and help them see the “person behind the product.” Then I address the question of the different types of personal writing in the class by tracing the changing definition of the term throughout the assignments, and I link each type of personal writing to a type of thinking Dr. Wilson advocates. In Table 1, I summarize the interplay of the personal and academic in the assignments. Finally, I discuss Dr. Wilson’s evaluation of the students' papers, showing her pushing the students towards the critical thinking necessary for careers in textile and apparel management.

As a general rule, I use the broad term “personal” to refer to all aspects of the students' experience and personality that become apparent to others, intentionally or unintentionally, whether as an anecdote told in discussion section, a personality characteristic apparent in an interview, or the broad spectrum of their own stories that the students chose from to share. As I later borrow Candace Spigelman’s term “personal academic,” I remain consistent with her definition of “personal writing” as “the ways in which writers make sense of their lives by organizing their experience into first-person stories” (3). “Personal writing” in this case, will be used only to refer to an actual written product.

I define academic writing as argumentative, research-based writing, using the formal conventions of academic discourse. I do not qualify “personal” and “academic” on

the usage of the “I” pronoun, because many composition texts ask students to use the “I” to situate themselves in a scholarly discussion. Gerald Graff's *They Say/I Say*, for example, suggests that students use the following as a model for their thesis statements: “Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that _____” (60) and “Though I concede that _____, I still insist that _____” (60). For my purposes, the most notable difference between personal and academic writing is that academic writing relies on research-based support, usually published essays, books, and articles. In personal writing, evidence is the experience of the writer, the way he or she views the world, and her autobiographical narrative. I would also like to note that the terms “personal” and “academic” are not labels that I am enforcing upon the writing in this course; they were typically used by my study participants in the ways described above.

Professor's Beliefs About the Personal. In our first interview, Dr. Wilson defined the “personal” as part of a social and historical context, not necessarily as an end in itself. This view of personal writing is remarkably similar to Hesford's view of personal experience as a window into the social world. Dr. Wilson values stories as ways into those contexts: “I want them to find and use evidence to back up the personal stories; that makes them a historian” (Int. 1). She also views the personal as a stepping stone to the academic: “I get them to do things that are more academic by starting with the personal; I think that researching their own clothing causes them to be curious about more than just the object” (Int.1). Wilson describes the ability to observe and analyze people and culture as a skill required for the analytical thinking students might have to do one day as retailers or marketers, predicting and evaluating retail trends like “Why is the

pink T-shirt selling and the blue one isn't?" (Int.1) Dr. Wilson also believes that the personal elements show students "the human behind the product," helping them get past the mindset that products are only important not only because they make money, but because they "make people feel a certain way" (Int. 1).

As Dr. Wilson's case shows, the discourse of a discipline is more than simply elements of style and substance, which places the class in contrast to much of the research on writing across the curriculum classrooms that concerns the "discourses" of the different disciplines, and how WAC classes introduce and familiarize students with those discourses. Though students may not use a personal writing style in their future careers, Dr. Wilson uses personal writing to teach students a way of thinking that will be helpful to them. As Anne Herrington argues in her study of engineering courses, writing can also introduce students to "what it means to think and act in various disciplinary forums" (119). Similarly, for Dr. Wilson, teaching personal writing is not necessarily teaching the discourse of her discipline. As she explained to the TA's in one of the weekly meetings, she chooses to teach writing-intensive courses because "writing is the best way to learn." By honing the students' powers of observation and analysis, she prepares them for careers as marketers, advertisers, or buyers. She's not just teaching a way of writing; she's teaching the way of thinking in her discipline.

The Personal Defined through the Writing Assignments. In the **I Believe statement**, the "personal" was the focal point of the paper. By way of example, on the first day of the course lecture, Dr. Wilson read the students her own "I Believe statement," which discussed her beliefs that "all people are not created equal." This belief was based on her experience as Peace Corps volunteer in Brazil and a junior-high

teacher in the inner city of Rochester, New York. Dr. Wilson's statement that she believed in helping people (“It is our responsibility, then to help those who are needy—for whatever reason”) revealed her as a teacher unafraid to reveal her personal experiences. The assignment for students to create their own statements validates their experiences in the discourse of the class, prioritizing the role of the personal in the functioning of the class (the statements were important enough to expend an entire discussion section). Finally, the statements set the standard for the revealing and unraveling of the self in the course.

The **T-Shirt Project** links the idea of “personal” to the narrative form. All the students bring in a T-shirt to the discussion section and share a 2-3 minute story about the T-shirt. The other students write down the name of the student and a brief description of the T-shirt. Later on, the students are to classify the T-shirts according to their accompanying narratives in categories such as “friends” or “sports.” They put these categories into an Excel spreadsheet, numerically totaling the amount of T-shirt stories in each category. From this spreadsheet, they craft a thesis about the significance of the most popular themes they observed in the presentations, and give examples of T-shirts and how they classified them.

Story becomes an important factor of the personal in this assignment, because the sharing of stories is the “research” for the project. In one discussion section, a student asked if she could bring in a T-shirt that represented her “personality,” and Rebecca told her the T-shirt was not supposed to be a metaphor for one's personality, but rather have a story attached. Also, the transition from the “I Believe” statement to the T-Shirt Projects relocated the personal from “mine” to “ours.” For the I Believe statement, students

simply shared their ideas, but in the T-Shirt Project, the personal became public, because the stories of the individual became “research” to be organized and analyzed by others. Accordingly, the students cite each other's stories on their works cited page as though they were citing an academic article (e.g. “Sarah, Presentation, Sept. 2006”). The stories gain meaning from the way that the students used them, either as items in a bar graph, or as examples in the paper. The student show examples of T-shirts in their papers, and how those T-shirts fit a certain category, such as family or sports, using their powers of observation to see the individual presentations as part of a larger trend.

Identifying emergent patterns, selecting relevant examples, using observation skills: although not explicitly labeled as such, the T-shirt project is strikingly similar to ethnography.⁴ Furthering the ethnographic quality of the project, in one discussion section, Dr. Wilson took a survey of the class to determine their majors, and where they were from. She told them to use this information in their analysis. Ethnographic research is remarkably suitable for the kinds of skills that Dr. Wilson aims to teach: asking questions, making observations, seeing patterns, predicting trends, analyzing recursively, and drawing conclusions. It also enables the students to see the “person behind the product” and understand why and how products are important to people.

In the **Love, Loss, and What I Wore project**, the focus shifts back to one's own personal narrative, using it as a starting point for intensive research. The students begin by creating a scrapbook of ten pictures or drawings. The students can choose how they want to artistically represent the garment: drawings, photographs, magazine

⁴ It was strange for me to be sitting in the classroom that day when the students were writing down all the same things I was!

advertisements, and even fabrics. They also include a story about the garment, usually about a paragraph long. I was impressed with how much effort the students put into the books. They used all variations of art supplies: paints, markers, glitter, stickers, colored paper. One student cross-stitched the cover of her book. Another glued in a set of fake pearl beads. Dr. Wilson told me that in the past, students have given the books to their mothers or grandmothers as Christmas presents.⁵

In the research paper for the project, the students must open up their personal stories to a larger context, seeing themselves as social and cultural constructions. The aim of the project is to show the student how they are a part of society and culture, as per the title of the course: “Social Appearance in Time and Space.” The students choose five garments of the ten in the book to study. The research paper is divided into five sections for each garment, each section approximately a paragraph long, asking students to conduct their own research and use the technical terms of the field. The first two sections, “Historical Context” and “Social/Cultural Context” are based on the students' research of primary and secondary sources. The next two sections, “Components of Culture” and “Mechanisms of Organization” are based on Jean A. Hamilton's “Dress as a Cultural Subsystem: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles,” which creates a culturally based discourse and framework for study in textiles and fashion, dividing the field into mechanisms and components of culture to be used as units of analysis. A final section, Interactions, discusses how the components and mechanisms in sections worked together.

Thinking like a marketer or buyer is also part of the requirement for the Love

⁵ There is another thesis here about the benefits of blending art and writing. Also, as far as I know, no student has ever given her mother or grandmother an English composition paper for Christmas.

Loss Project. The assignment shows students how clothing has personal meaning for individuals. The students look at the “frames” of the garment: their own narratives combine with the historical situation of the clothing to create a fuller story, but also to help them understand, as Hesford says, their “positionings and worldviews” (60). The assignment also calls into question how historical circumstances (such as “fads”) and social circumstances (like a certain group of friends) influenced them. Allowing students to use primary sources like magazine ads from a past time period gives them the opportunity to step back into a specific cultural moment and see how advertisements might have influenced them.

The Diversity Project uses “the personal” but not personal writing, per se. I include the Diversity Project in this study because it asks students to compare their own findings with academic articles, which is an important move in the personal academic argument. In this assignment, students must craft a personally interesting research question, and design a research plan to find an answer. The students select a person from another culture or generation who interests them, conduct research about that person's generation or culture, and then use that research to interview him or her. Students then match up their own findings to the academic articles. They analyze the argument of the academic article and make a claim about its validity based on their interviews. This assignment, like the T-Shirt Project, relies on distinctly ethnographic methodology. The assignment gives students agency and encourages them to find their own answers, instead of just looking at a book. Their “personal” findings are validated as important as an academic article.

Table 1 classifies the personal and academic components of the different

assignments. This table shows that although the assignments hinge on personal writing, the personal aspects are relatively minor compared to the academic aspects. Significantly, the academic aspects of these papers – thesis statement, sources, and arguments – will be familiar to composition teachers. I perceive this as a sign that personal writing can be integrated with academic writing in a way that preserves the integrity and purpose of academic discourse. Rather than making academic writing “easy” or “soft,” personal writing can complement its goals in productive ways. Also, personal writing and academic writing can be used to achieve the goals of learning in other disciplines, as I show by aligning the assignments with the type of thinking they teach.

Table 1: Personal and Academic Aspects of the Writing Assignments.

Assignment	Personal Aspect	Academic Aspect	Type of Thinking Relevant to TAM
I Believe Statement	One-page statement of student's "core beliefs"	Core beliefs affect all the work the students do; Helps students get to know each other	Core beliefs affect perception, actions
T-Shirt Project	Class' stories about their T-shirts	Crafting a thesis that interprets findings using support from course readings and examples from class presentations, Citing sources	Making Observations, Noting trends, Understanding why products are important to people
Love Loss Project	Pictures of ten garments, stories behind garments	Finding and integrating primary and secondary sources showing social/cultural/historical aspects of garments and course readings, Citing sources	Seeing the "person behind the product," Understanding how social forces bear on dress
Diversity Project	Choosing an interviewee, Creating personally interesting research questions	Comparing interview findings with two academic journal articles, primary sources, and course readings; Citing sources	Crafting a researchable question, Conducting research to find an answer

Evaluation of the Personal. Dr. Wilson's grading practices also show her teaching the students to think like marketers, making astute observations about patterns and trends. For example, in the “Findings/Results” section of the T-shirt Project, worth 40% of the total paper grade, students were to (1) describe their findings (2) use the presentations and the readings to support their observations and (3) cite correctly. In the grading rubric, which was made available to the students along with the assignment sheet, Dr. Wilson writes that she wants students to “support” their “interpretations” of the importance of certain categories, meaning that the students were to explain why a certain category had a larger number of T-shirts. She not only looks for the students to listen to the stories and say what categories they were put into; she wants the students to “interpret” what those categories mean.

Her written evaluations of student papers also show her urging the students to think in this way. Dr. Wilson praises students with a “good” or “excellent” in the margin if they are able to connect their observations to the assigned readings and the presentations. In her comments, she enjoins the students to “say why these themes are important in American culture” or how they “represent culture” or “connect to American culture.” A student who achieved a perfect score in this section discussed how “family” was the most common theme in the T-shirt presentations. She cites T. Bettina Cornwell's article “T-Shirt as Wearable Diary,” part of the course reader, to explain why family is a common theme, and then explains the significance of family in modern culture. This is a common pattern in the papers with high scores in on the “Findings/Results” section – for multiple categories, the student uses the readings and her knowledge of culture to discuss

the significance of the category. Rebecca also marked down students who merely rehashed all the presentations, or students who discussed the presentations and not the readings. Clearly, the goal is to get students to interpret what they see, an important skill in the fashion and marketing world.

The Diversity Project advocates this same kind of thinking. One of Dr. Wilson's most frequent comments on the papers is "How did you analyze the data?" Again, she evaluates them not on the writing itself, but on the thinking represented by the writing. She often writes "good" or "excellent" in parts of the paper where the students are showing the *process* of what they did. For example, she writes "Good" next to a student's careful description of her research process: "I plan to test my conclusions by interviewing my grandmother about her dress. I will listen intently as she speaks; afterward, I will write down the main points from the interview." Dr. Wilson is not just evaluating the students on how good their thesis is – she wants to see how they got to the thesis to evaluate whether they are thinking critically in the process.

Student Responses to Personal Writing

This section illuminates the students' "responses and reactions" to personal writing, both negative and positive, first from interviews and then from the writing itself. I found that although students enjoy personal writing, they do not always understand why it is important. When personal writing is blended with academic writing, they tend to see the former as a burden on the latter. They claim ownership over personal writing, and often see it as less formal than academic writing. Their objections are not unlike many of the objections I've heard about personal writing, making me wonder whether they had internalized some of those biases. The writing itself reveals that sometimes students lapse

into clichés when faced with a personal writing task, sometimes because they are uncomfortable revealing and articulating what they really want to say. I suggest that the assignments bring out what Hesford calls the students' “conflicting identities,” asking them to write and think from multiple positions. This conflict leads to the use of cliché and trouble negotiating the use of the “I” pronoun, although using it can help them show the process of their thinking in writing. In blending the personal and the academic in this assignment, students are able to adopt the position of a genuine researcher, gain self-awareness, and acquire a sense of their own constructedness.

Students' Ideas about Personal Writing. I interviewed five total students three times throughout the semester. “Cubeleg”⁶ is a sophomore TAM major. “Heather” is a junior, and also a TAM major. “Gaby” is a sophomore transfer student. She has no declared major, but is considering pre-medicine, because she would like to be a pediatrician. “Emily” is a junior journalism major, minoring in TAM. Mia is a junior TAM major. Cubeleg, Gaby, and Heather were in Dr. Wilson's discussion section, and Emily and Mia were in Rebecca's discussion section.

On the whole, my interviewees said that they enjoyed the personal writing and found it interesting and easy. Emily said that she liked the Love Loss Project in particular because “it was more personal so it was easier to write about my own experiences” (Int. 3). Cubeleg said that the project seemed difficult at the time, but once it was done, she liked looking through the book to reflect on her experiences. The students also had more confidence in their personal writing. Cubeleg said, “Well, if I'm

⁶ She is a fan of *Lord of the Rings*, and asked that her pseudonym be an homage to the series of books and movies.

writing something that's in my journal about what I've done, that's easy because it's stuff I know, it's easy to record it" (Int. 1) She also says that writing is easier for her when she's working under her "own motivation" (Int. 1). At the start of the semester, Gaby said she was looking forward to the class because of the personal writing. She said she was best at writing "emotional things," which she defines as "things that happened to me in my life" (Int. 1). Emily said that by the end of the semester, she'd learned "I'm better with generating my own thoughts than taking what other people say and trying to put something together based on other people's words" (Int. 3).

When the papers moved away from personal writing, the students enjoyed them less. The effect of the shared nature of the personal in the T-Shirt Project was that students didn't see it as personal as the other papers. Emily thought the T-shirt Project "was more just looking at our class as a whole and the things that are important to our class, whereas [the Love Loss Project] is more about what's important to you" (Int. 3). Mia said that the T-shirt project was her least favorite assignment because the other assignments were "more fun, more personal" (Int. 3).

As much as the students liked the personal writing of the course, they didn't necessarily believe it was relevant. Cubeleg said that she thought the class would be "fun," but that some of the papers might be "busy work" (Int. 1). She said the Love, Loss, and What I Wore book was going to be fun to create, but she questioned its "educational value," saying that she thought the accompanying paper would be more "informative" (Int. 1). Emily had a similar criticism, saying that she didn't understand how sharing the I Believe statement on the first day of the discussion section "goes along with a TAM class" (Int. 1). The second writing assignment, she felt, "seemed a little silly; at the end

of the day, I just wrote a paper on T-shirts” (Int. 2). Heather said that while writing the T-shirt paper, “I felt like, 'Why am I doing this'?” (Int. 2).

Another complaint about the assignments was that the academic aspects were an unwelcome imposition into the personal writing. Cubeleg told me she felt the Love Loss Project was “artificial:”

Each garment has its own history for me, and I know the story of the garment and I know the very specific cultural context of that garment because I wore it. And for this paper I had to draw out and almost remove the personal aspect of it and look for broad historical and broad cultural context which in some ways is artificial . . . and so I just knew that a lot of things I was saying in this paper, I was putting someone else's opinion on it and it wasn't necessarily true. (Int. 3)

I quote her eloquent and significant argument here in full because it so clearly epitomizes the struggle that arises between the personal and the academic: students feel that the academic research alters the existing personal meaning. Hesford also alludes to this when she writes of the “contradictory relations” that characterize the tensions between the writer's identity and their social context (xxix). Writing about the frames of one's experience is not a neat or static endeavor, and it is Hesford's hope that “personal and political agency” is the result of such struggles (xxix).

Also crucial to the students' perception of personal writing was that when the personal was separated from the academic, the personal writing was evaluated on mechanics, and the academic writing was evaluated for its content. The I Believe statements, which were entirely personal, were only graded on mechanics. The rubric for the book portion of the Love Loss Project rewards points for books that are “interesting and attractive.” The grade for the story portion is based on whether “the stories show evidence of thought and are legible.” Stories are marked down if they are “very brief,

focusing only on the garment with little attention to context.” Still, the book and the stories combined only constitute 20 out of 100 points for the project, and in a TA meeting discussing the Love Loss Project, Dr. Wilson said that the students should receive all 20 points possible on the Love Loss book “unless it looks like they spent 30 minutes making it.” Dr. Wilson told the TA's to grade the books “only on effort,” and not “on spelling and grammar.”

These differing grading standards set up another distinction between personal and academic writing, and an important one because the students were extremely motivated by grades. Often I would begin interviews with the generic question, “So how is the class going?” and my interviewee would list off the grades she got on her last few assignments, as though her grade defined her experience in the class. When I asked, “How do you think you did on the paper?” they would discuss their theories of their teachers' grading practices (or lack of knowledge about their grading practices). Likely, some students saw personal writing as a less important part of the class because it wasn't graded as rigorously.

The students also claimed ownership over personal writing, consistently using the phrase “my own” and “your own” to describe the personal writing assignments. I asked Emily to compare the T-Shirt Project and the writing she does for the campus newspaper: “This was mostly – from your own – the words and thoughts are my own” (Int. 2). The students also felt as though they got to “choose” what they wanted to write about, which was interesting because Dr. Wilson set very clear standards for their work, consistently distributing detailed assignments sheets with very specific rubrics. Gaby said that she liked the personal writing because “you care, not something that's assigned, you have to

write about this thing” (Int. 1). Reflecting on the end of the semester, Emily said that in her journalism classes, she had to “take other people's words and put it into a paper” and contrasted that to the Love Loss Project “which was my own words” (Int. 3). Cubeleg said that in the Love Loss Project “you got to tell your own story” (Int. 3). Ownership over personal writing presented a particular problem with the research in the course. As I will elaborate in a later section, students had problems seeing how their personal narratives intersected with academic articles and textbooks.

This ownership over personal writing went so far that students were sometimes hesitant to share their writing with the class. Mia said that she didn't know she would have to read her I Believe statement to the class and that her statement “was more personal than I would have written it if I had known” (Int. 1). Rebecca asked the students to share their Love Loss books in the discussion section and very few did. When Rebecca brought this up at the TA meeting, Dr. Wilson said that not wanting to share was a trend she's been seeing over the past few years. She said students are becoming less “community-minded.”

Several students also said that they saw personal writing as “informal,” which probably related to the fact that they saw it in opposition to traditional academic writing and that it was graded more on effort than on content. Mia said, “I think my writing style is more journal writing – It's not formal at all. I would say it's really informal . . . I think I'm more of a personal writer – I don't hold back really – that could be bad, but I kind of just go with the flow and I don't really think about it, what I'm really feeling” (Int.1). Gaby said her I Believe statement “was nothing really formal – it was just like I was telling a story (Int.1).”

Their objections to personal writing sounded strangely familiar to me; they were the objections I received in the class I discussed in my introduction. “Personal writing doesn't lead anywhere,” and “Personal writing is fluffy writing,” and “Personal writing is too casual” were all part of the discourse that expressed concerns about my use of personal writing in my composition class. It made me wonder whether the students had internalized some of the common objections to personal writing, perhaps from other teachers. Most of these objections, however, came at the beginning of the semester, and by the end, many had changed their mind. Sociologist Bradley Fisher describes one student's reaction to the use of journals in a sociology class: “It helped me understand myself. I thought my life was sort of empty and boring, but I found out that my life is full of meaningful experiences and insights” (159). I will show what the students learned and how they learned it in the respective sections for each paper.

The Personal in Student Writing. The most striking mode of response in the **I Believe statements** was that students would choose a platitude such as “Everything happens for a reason” or “Life goes on” as their core belief, and then give a brief anecdote about why they believe that platitude. For example, one student believed that “Life goes on” because she survived a bad breakup. What was important about the use of cliché was that students managed to find a cliché regardless of the story – significant or insignificant, earth-shattering or dull, everyone found a cliché. One student wrote that she believed that everyone should have a dog. Another talked about when her best friend stopped liking her after she came back from summer camp in seventh grade. Another talked about not making the cheerleading squad in sixth grade. It was difficult for me to understand that of all the experiences one could choose to talk about, *these* would be the

ones she picked. In the margin of my notebook, I wrote, “Seriously? Your dog determines your core beliefs?” In the same class, however, some students shared extremely high stakes, emotional experiences. One student talked about his battle with leukemia. Another student talked about a diving accident that left her paralyzed and her process of learning to walk all over again. These students used cliché to make their point as well.

I believe that the cliché serves to negate the risk of the story, In “Response Styles and Ways of Knowing,” Chris Anson says that students in the beginning of their college careers are unwilling to dwell in uncertainty and instead make “statements that conform to dominant political and social ideologies” (“Response” 335). They “mimic the established dogmas which, etched in stone by Authority, are incontrovertible truths to be memorized” (335). This problem is amplified in the I Believe assignment, where students are put in the position of having to express a generalization anyway, and are hesitant to share unpopular or risky beliefs with other students whom they barely know.⁷

In the **T-shirt Project**, the students were to draw “conclusions” based on their research, presumably some kind of an argument about the significance of their findings. Mostly, they argued for the communicative nature of T-shirts: what the T-shirt says about its wearer, the memories and other meanings represented by T-shirts, and the role of T-shirts in culture. It was difficult to assess whether or not students were actually writing an argument as I defined it: “something about which reasonable people can disagree.” It was also difficult to know if their thesis was even something they didn't know before

⁷ As an example of this hesitation, “Bridget,” one of the TA's, said that a student in her class read aloud something to the effect of "It's not wrong for a Christian woman to love a Hindu man" and Bridget noticed that the girl had actually written "It's not wrong for an agnostic woman to love a Hindu man." Clearly, the student perceived that she was in an atmosphere where being perceived as Christian was favorable to being perceived as agnostic.

conducting the research. The “argument” they made was typically simplistic – T-shirts don't look important, but they are. Oftentimes, the writing would ring of cliché, such as in the I Believe statements: “A T-shirt is similar to . . . a memoir, communicating a personal journey, but without ever speaking a word.” Or: “In today's society, not only are T-shirts a part of America's material culture, but they also symbolize one's self-expression and individual characteristics.” Even so, these clichéd statements could technically be read as arguments, depending on the degree to which the student believed them before conducting the research.

One interviewee, Cubeleg, did craft an arguable thesis. While her argument is something other students wrote as well – that T-shirts show the significance of family and friends in society – she frames it differently to pose it as an argument. She came up with the following thesis: “A continually more fluid society seems to reflect a decreasing prioritization on family or other long term relationships. Yet, in a study recently conducted at the University of Missouri, students overwhelmingly presented family and friends as an important theme in their lives.” She told me that it's easier for her to write about things she “feels strongly about,” and she wasn't excited about writing the T-shirt paper because she felt she had to “regurgitate everything we had been told” (Int. 2). So she used her thesis statement to boost her motivation to write the paper. She said that finding this thesis gave her “focus” and made the paper “a little more interesting to write” (Int. 2). In my second interview with Dr. Wilson, she specifically cited Cubeleg's paper as one that did a “marvelous” job of analysis, because she was able to situate her thesis argumentatively, meaning that she was able to frame it as something about which people might disagree.

Another interviewee, Heather, also came up with a thesis. I asked her how she went from the spreadsheet to actually writing the paper. She said:

Dr. Wilson said that there was this idea that we did this research but then *we could go any angle into it that we wanted*. So I think what I did was *I was looking for quotes that I could start this paper with* – and this first quote, it's Virginia Woolf, it's about how they wear us and we don't wear them. *So I went from the angle that clothes already come with a story and then sometimes you make the story while you wear it* (Int. 2, emphasis mine).

Significantly, Heather acknowledges that Dr. Wilson has given the class free reign to use their “own angle,” but her first step was to find someone else's quote. Note the way she relies on previously established knowledge from “experts” to make her argument in the opening sentences of her paper, not unlike the way the students used cliché in the I Believe statements. Heather writes:

Virginia Woolf is quoted as saying, “There is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they would mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking.” Many studies support the idea that Ms. Woolf is conveying in this statement, and my research conducted through “The T-shirt Project” is no different.

As the T-shirt project is ethnographic in nature, Heather also seems to be struggling with her own credibility as ethnographer, negotiating and even conceding (to Virginia Woolf) her authority as a writer and as a participant-observer to the t-shirt presentations. Heather grapples with the self on several planes: the self who has seen the presentations, wants to accurately represent them, has to make sense out of them by clustering them into categories, and must impose a meaning on them to create an arguable thesis. Her reliance on an established authority is likely a result of this struggle.

Other students had problems claiming authority over their writing as well.

Another salient feature of the T-shirt papers was the use or non-use of the “I” pronoun. I had expected that the students would start out using the “I” pronoun in the data collection and methods sections (e.g. I studied, I found), and then drop the pronoun to make conclusions about the class or the role of T-shirts in society (e.g. T-shirts are important to society). What I found, however, was a remarkable consistency: if a student started out using the “I” pronoun, she used it throughout the whole paper. If not, then she never used it. Fourteen students in Rebecca's section and five students in Dr Wilson's section used the “I” pronoun (what I call “I” texts). The “I” texts showed the writer in action, taking ownership over the data, and explaining his or her thinking process. One student writes, “I conducted a study on a group of approximately 25 college students aged 18-22.” Another says, “In my findings, I first noticed the trend of the shirts symbolizing fond memories.” Eleven students in Rebecca's section and five in Dr. Wilson's did not use the “I” pronoun at all (what I call “they” texts). “They” texts used “there were” constructions, passive voice, and attributed their own research actions to the entire class. For example: “The study was done among the 25 students of TAM 2500 Group F” and “Five T-shirts were chosen as a sample of the study.”

I understand that the choice of using the “I” pronoun might seem like a minor decision, but I want to point out two specific outcomes from this usage. First, giving students the freedom to use the “I” pronoun can encourage them to elaborate on and make visible a process of thinking. Use of the “I” voice seemed to encourage students to talk about the decision-making process of categorization in a way that the “they” voice didn't. When using the “I” voice, students seemed to have an easier time discussing problems they had in writing. For example, one student wrote, “I had a difficult time

categorizing this T-shirt because he didn't buy it the T-shirt at the World Cup, he already owned the T-shirt . . . But after a lot of consideration, I decided to put it in the trophy category because it reminded him of the World Cup, even though he didn't buy it as a result of the trip.” Other students who used the “I” pronoun related similar struggles. The “they” texts however, tended to gloss over these struggles, skipping directly to the final action: “Each shirt was categorized into one of seven groups.”

Throughout *Framing Identities*, Hesford continually uses the word “struggle” to describe the way student integrate their various identities (56): I am arguing that the use or non-use of the “I” pronoun as well as the appeal to authorities by quoting them directly or using a cliché is suggestive of such an internal battle. I also suggest that the students' resistance to using “I” is evidence that they have internalized academic discourse practices that encourage objective writing. That my interviewees questioned the value of personal writing in the course points to those internalized ideas about the place and worth of personal writing in academic discourse.

Hesford's analysis of her family photograph in *Framing Identities* is similar to the students' analysis of their garments in the **Love, Loss, and What I Wore Project**; in fact, their analysis adds even more frames than Hesford imagines. They begin with a frame of their own artistic expression and the choice of how to represent their clothing – some pasted in pictures, some drew, some cut and pasted pieces of fabric. The students also choose the frame of their narrative about the garment. Some wrote in a reflective voice, laughing at past fashion mistakes, regretting how much money they spent on an item, or affectionately recalling the good times they had wearing the garment. Some relied on family members' memories to tell the story because they were too young to remember it.

Some tell long stories about the experience of wearing the garment, and some say only briefly what it meant to them.

Once they've written the narratives, the students have several lenses through which to view the garment. They conduct research for the first two categories, but the the Love Loss Project deviates from a traditional research paper because they can use primary sources, which link the personal and the cultural. The assignment sheet states that “the best sources to explore history are primary sources (materials produced during the time under study) such as magazines from the period you wore the clothing.” For example, one student wore Keds tennis shoes in 1993, so she cited an ad for Keds tennis shoes in a magazine called *Parents* from that year.

In the third and fourth section, they adopt the discourse of the discipline to analyze their garments. The students use the terms in Hamilton's article about metatheory to discuss the cultural significance of their clothing. For example, Hamilton identifies one component of culture as “technology” or “the physical things used in adaptation to one's physical and social environment” (3). One student identifies her hooded sweatshirt as a form of technology because it keeps her warm and identifies her as an MU student, making it “a physical thing that I used to adapt to my physical and social environments.” and one mechanisms of culture as “family and kinship organization” or “mechanisms that define kinship relationships” (4). For example, one student classifies her cheerleading outfit as representative of this mechanism because of she was “so close to the girls on the squad and my uniform reminded me of them.”

The final step of the project was to provide “a complete and thoughtful consideration” of what the student learned in creating the project. For my purposes, this

final moment of reflection was extremely useful. Many students wrote about their perception and others' perceptions of the project, and how their own perceptions were altered over the course of the writing. They said originally they thought it would be easy but once they actually started doing it they realized it was difficult. Some said that it wasn't until completing the project that they realized its significance. One student writes about how she came to understand the significance of the project. At first she was "not too thrilled" about the project because it "sounded like a lot of work and I did not fully understand the point," perhaps in the same way that my interviewees did not see the purpose of personal writing. Ultimately, however, she is able to understand how examining her own clothes leads her to investigate the culture of dress: "Now, I see the interesting themes . . . I have learned that dress is such an important part of culture that is overlooked a lot of the time."

Though Spigelman and Hesford argue that autobiographical analysis can lead to larger conclusions about society or history, many students reported a greater degree of self-awareness. Still, this self-awareness is technically a knowledge of how they personally fit or have fit into culture. Hesford writes that the process of interpreting her family photograph serves as a "heuristic for thinking about my shifting roles" (4), and it seems that interpreting their clothing served the same purpose for many students, because their concluding statements shift between roles as student, daughter or son, friend, and historian. One student reports in her conclusion that "the thing that I learned the most out of this project is the fact that I am very narrow minded about fashion history." Another says she learned that "when I was younger I followed too much rather than having my own style." Both these students learned something about their relationship to history and

society. Another student drew parallels between past fashion trends and those of her own time period: “Clothing my mother and grandmother were wearing as children and teenagers has been modified and reapplied to our cultural system today in a new fashionable way.” She positions herself on a trajectory of history, in what Hesford terms “an autobiographical contact zone” (7), incorporating her own family narratives with historical moments.

Many were also able to notice patterns and trends in the larger fashion world as well. One student wrote about how in looking through magazines for ads she could see how the popularity of fur correlated to the popular beliefs about the morality of fur at the time, leading her to conclude that “Social interactions and morals play a large part in what we wear.” Another student said that she found out that “many styles have been recycled over the last decade. There were many trends in the 1990's that I thought would fade, yet in fact inspired into more modernized fashions we wear today.” Others write about the role of dress in culture:

“Throughout history, ideas about what was acceptable have changed to a great extent, and the clothes we wear today reflect those changes.” Another reflects that “Dress often puts people in various groups depending on social, political, or economic status.”

It's important to note that while these revelations may not seem earth-shattering, they are conclusions that the students reached *on their own*. As Dr. Wilson's comments on students' papers above show, she only moves them in the direction of knowledge. She is, as John Dewey puts it, “guide and director,” steering the students in the right direction, while “the energy” for the endeavor comes from those who are learning (qtd. in Simpson, Jackson, and Aycock). Certainly, Dr. Wilson could have lectured on the above material

and perhaps the students would have remembered it or even used it someday, but by asking the student to find it out for themselves and asking them to look for the truth of it in their own lives, they internalize the information and gain power and control over it. The scripts of their autobiographies become pedagogical tools, and they learn that the above statements are true not because a teacher said so, but because they are true, as one student wrote, “in the context of my life.”

The **Diversity Projects** were some of the best papers in the class, containing some of the most concise and clear thinking of any of the writing of the semester. The paper required decision-making, observation, synthesis, and analysis of information. After choosing an interviewee, the students had to find academic articles pertaining to the dress of the interviewee's culture, concisely summarize the articles, and construct “domains of inquiry” – two areas of interest about which they could ask the interviewee. Then they conducted the interview and compared their findings to the findings of the articles. Most significantly, the students had to *describe in writing* their processes for each of these steps, which many students took as license to use the “I” pronoun.

These papers show the students adopting an inquiring stance they hadn't conveyed in previous papers. They represented themselves as researchers, as people who were doing a project because they wanted to know something, as opposed to because it had been assigned for a class. Students seemed to be taking more responsibility for the research, using phrases like “I wanted to know” or “I was curious to find out.” They formulated questions for information they genuinely wanted to know. One student relays her assumptions about dress and then uses her research to put them to the test: “I assumed [my grandmother] would have housedresses, maybe a suit, but not a party dress, and I

figured she was not living the American dream. Would I be right?"

While most students were more comfortable with the "I" pronoun in these papers, several show a struggle between using the "I" necessary to describe the process of writing the paper and the desire to use academic prose. One student alternates between both, going so far as to refer to her grandmother as "Georgia" (instead of "my grandmother"): "Questions related to the domain of inquiry that I have previously presented will be asked, and the information gathered from Georgia will be further analyzed and compared to data obtained from journals to determine if the initial themes I have discovered are evident in Georgia's experiences." Again, this represents the "struggle" Hesford names between students' multiple identities. The diction reflects the students' inner conflicts about how to position herself as researcher, historian, interviewer, and granddaughter.

Students were able to use their academic articles and course concepts in more interesting and nuanced ways than the reporting they had done in earlier papers, taking a critical stance towards the academic articles. These assignments align with Spigelman's personal academic argument because they ask students to interpret arguments in terms of experience and find the common ground between their perspectives and more established scholars (117). For example, one student found an article that talked about how the dress of African American females leads to the stereotype that they are sexually promiscuous. When she asked her interviewee about this, she said it was not only dress but also the "voluptuous" body shape of African American women led to the stereotype. The student was able to address and question her resources and look for alternative explanations for their findings. One student writes that her grandmother's views about being a stay-at-

home mother “paints a very different picture” than the articles she read about stay-at-home parenting. She says her grandmother “never felt oppressed because she stayed home, it was important to her and should be just as respected as any job she would have outside the home.” Some students even speculated on the reasons for the discrepancies between the articles and the interviews. The student above wrote that her grandmother probably wore dresses for so long because she lived in a small town and that perhaps she was not “impacted with all the . . . new ways of dressing.”

As in the Love Loss Project, in the final reflective section of the paper, the students reported they achieved greater self-awareness. The nature of the project required students to define their relationship to someone else, enabling them to map their own perceptions onto another person's story. One student wrote, “I also realized that I have a preconceived notion about the Black race and how they behave.” Another said, “I learned that I'm not as culturally aware as I'd like to be. I don't have many traditions that I hold dear to me and I wish I did.”

Students who interviewed a family member found Hesford's “autobiographical contact zone” (7), where the narratives of past and present generations intersect. For Hesford, this happens between herself and her great-grandfather. For the students in this project, it often happened between themselves and their grandmothers. One student writes, “I believe that I learned not to be materialistic from my grandmother and through my father.” Many also placed themselves on a continuum with a family member: “What I enjoyed most was learning about my grandma. I loved hearing about how much she loved shoes and wore high heels every single day . . . High heel shoes are my favorite thing in the world – she must be where I get it from.”

Difficulties with Personal Writing

This section primarily concerns difficulties that students had with the assignments. I chose to study difficulties because I believed that Walvoord and McCarthy's focus on students difficulties led not to criticisms of teachers or students, but to a productive discussion of “the complex interactions across time among teacher and students in a particular setting, involving cognitive, cultural, academic, physical and emotional factors” (5). In other words, my goal is not to criticize students, but to look at difficulties in their full web of implications with relation to personal writing. Keith Rhodes issues an excellent caution to researchers that is especially pertinent to this study. He writes that oftentimes in ethnographic study, "The inquiry becomes less a question of 'What is the cultural situation of writing education?' and more a question of 'What is lacking in these students?' No matter how benevolently this last question is framed, it reeks of early anthropology that looked at the 'deficiencies' of foreign cultures paternally" (28). I also stay away from criticizing teachers. Thomas Newkirk discusses “the responsibility of intervention,” where a researcher has an ethical obligation to confront a problem situation, specifically in the case of correcting what the researcher believes to be a teacher's error (14). Newkirk puts it euphemistically – “an illustration of educational possibilities” – but it amounts to telling someone how to do their job (14). Newkirk does not discuss the ramifications of this stance if one is “studying up,” such as in my case as a graduate student studying a well-respected tenured member of another discipline, or the possibility that this only serves to reinforce the implicit hierarchy of the researcher-subject relationship. Overall, I am looking to understand difficulties as more complex than any specific failing of either teacher or students, and to see how those difficulties

relate to personal writing in particular.

Students had the greatest difficulty with making choices about personal information and conducting research. Although other explanations for these difficulties are posed in the next section, I offer some possible explanations for these difficulties in this section, because I agree with Thomas Newkirk that "The researcher should grant the teacher (and, when relevant, her students) the opportunity to respond to interpretations of problematical situations" (13). I was delighted to find that when asked, students and teachers both had interesting and relevant explanations for the problems that I hadn't even considered: inflexibility in choosing research topics, creating overly specific search terms that narrowed the search, and doing the assignment in reverse. I believe that the students needed to know how to select stories to research, to understand the flexibility of personal writing, and to have more guidance in regard to crafting a thesis statement.

Difficulties with Choosing Personal Stories. Spigelman writes that the personal can be used as a "starting place" for students to move into more academic arguments. But in my interviews with students, the link between personal material and writing inspiration was not always clear. The sheer quantity of information associated with personal writing presented a problem for students. While they resoundingly said they found personal writing easier than academic writing, many students reported problems with getting started on the I Believe statements, which were entirely personal. Cubeleg said, "I worked on it for two hours one afternoon and I couldn't get anywhere because I didn't have any ideas . . . It was really hard paring down and figuring out what [belief] was the most important one" (Int. 1). Gaby too expressed conflicting ideas about how personal writing could be used as inspiration. In describing her I Believe statement, she said "I

couldn't think of anything to write, so that's why I picked that [topic]. . . I couldn't really think of something like deep to think about . . . I started thinking about other things I could write about and nothing was coming to me so I just went with that” (Int. 1).

Heather described having a lot of trouble with writing the I Believe statement: “I started over seven or eight times. I would say it and then think, “That's not what I want to say at all,” and I would start over again . . . It took four hours” (Int. 1).

Organization and length both stemmed from problems students have with making choices in writing. In the I Believe statements and the Love Loss Projects, students could essentially choose to write about anything from the entire span of their life. Heather said the nature of the story that led to her I Believe statement was something “I could talk about forever – who knows how much I could write about it?” (Int. 1). She said that ultimately she was dissatisfied with her I Believe statement because she had to cut it so short. In the T-Shirt paper, students still had to choose from over 20 different stories. In the Diversity Project, students had a wide variety of people in their life to interview. Heather and Emily both said they had friends in other discussion sections whose T-shirt papers were too long because they couldn't decide what examples to include.

Nonetheless, while the quantity of possible information available for personal writing might cause difficulties, it can be productive to get students to think critically about what's important in their writing. The teacher is less likely to get the “information dump” that can happen in both research papers and personal essays, because students must make thoughtful choices about what they have access to, what they can research, and what they can write about effectively. For this reason, crafting an arguable thesis statement can go a long way towards helping students understand what personal

information will support their arguments. Heather and Cubeleg both said that finding thesis statements in the T-Shirt Projects made writing easier for them. Heather called the thesis she created in the T-Shirt Project her “focus,” and once she found that focus, “it was easy” to write (Int. 2). Also notable was that none of the students seemed to have any difficulty coming up with what garments to write about for the Love, Loss Project. When given a focus for their stories – limiting them to clothing they had worn – they had an easier time choosing topics.

Difficulties with Research. Dr. Wilson identified the most problematic part of the Love Loss Project as finding sources, and the use of internet sources. She said that for the first time this semester “Wikipedia reared its ugly head” (Int. 3). The research aspect of the Love Loss and Diversity papers was tremendously difficult for students – the students said so in class, the TA's brought it up in the TA meetings, and the students discussed it in the interviews. Although this study does not focus on the problems students have with research, I bring up this problem because it was so salient and because of the personal nature of what students were researching.

I was confused about the difficulty students had with finding sources, and their decision to resort to internet sources. Because a composition course is required before the students can take a lower-level writing-intensive class such as this one, I assumed that students would be familiar with library research. To further aid them, Dr. Wilson scheduled one discussion section early in the semester to meet in a computer classroom the library. The librarian showed the students a website on the library's homepage where she created a “source pack,” or special website for the course where the students could find databases pertaining to their particular assignments. She also showed them how to

use the library's other databases and how to find books. Dr. Wilson and Rebecca both said multiple times that they were available to help the students.

One potential cause of the problem was brought up in a TA meeting – the instructors mentioned that students often searched “too specifically,” and needed to broaden their search terms. Rebecca told her discussion section that for the Diversity Project, “the article doesn't have to be the exact same title as your paper.” I asked both Dr. Wilson and Rebecca why they believed the students had problems with research. For the Diversity Project specifically, Dr. Wilson and Rebecca both said that the problem was that students did the assignment backwards; instead of reading the articles and then doing the interviews, they conducted the interviews and then searched for articles that would support their findings. Both estimated that about half of their class completed the assignment this way.⁸ All my interviewees reported that they did it in the correct order, which is somewhat unfortunate, because I would have been interested to know why the students did the assignments in reverse. Dr. Wilson said she suspected it had to do with the fact that the assignment was over Thanksgiving break, and students might not have gotten to the library before break. Several days of inclement weather also may have prevented students from going to the library.

I asked the students themselves about what they felt was so difficult in the research process. Heather said that because they were to pick garments that have personal meaning, sometimes they got attached to certain garments that had great personal significance. She described the problem this way:

⁸ It's probably very telling about me that I never assumed students might do the assignment incorrectly. In future research projects, I need to remember that the students do not always do what the assignment asks, and this can be a source of problems.

You had to pick something out of your ten garments or pictures, you needed to keep an open mind researching. You spent ten minutes researching a pair of jeans, and you didn't find anything about the pair of jeans, you just skip it and find something else. You couldn't go into it with a set in stone: "These are the five I'm going to research, and these are the five I'm not." So it was almost like, research first and then choose what to write about. (Int. 2)

Heather is explaining one problem that can happen with research that begins in the personal: students need to understand that the personal is flexible. A key skill of research is choosing a suitable topic, and using the entirety of the students' experience as a starting point gives students a wide range of topics to choose from. For this reason, Dr. Wilson asked that they choose ten garments to go in the book, but only five to actually research. This way, students could switch topics without having to re-do the book. I asked students how they chose what garments to put in the book and the paper and the foremost consideration was the personal meaning of the garment. Only secondarily did they mention the research, and even then only when they had begun researching. Sometimes, even if they wanted to change topics they couldn't because they'd already made the page in the book and didn't want to start over. Some students said that they picked articles of clothing that were interesting to them or relevant in their lives and only later discovered that they couldn't find any research on them.

Another problem of research and personal writing was the split students saw between the research and the personal meaning of their garments. Many adopted a "me vs. them" mentality towards the research, likely a result of their "ownership" over personal writing I mentioned earlier. Heather drew a productive link between students' aversion to research and the ownership over the personal I discussed earlier. She said that the Love Loss book "will be better" than a traditional research paper "because you can

come up with your own stuff rather than sitting on the internet to research, or finding stuff in the library. Making your own thing is better than research” (Int. 2).

Personal Writing and Cognitive Development

In this section, I use William Perry's *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years* and Belenky *Women's Ways of Knowing* by Belenky et al. to offer some explanations for the reactions of students to the personal writing, and the thinking required in the course. I qualify these explanations in several ways. First, I do not claim to have done an exhaustive study of the ways that my interviewees and the other students in the course perceive knowledge, so I base my argument for the applicability of college students' cognitive development on the actions of the entire class, to avoid the labeling of individuals. I focus on the students' reactions to quizzes, peer reviews, grading, and the discussion sections. Although a discussion of the students' thinking processes may seem to deviate from my focus on the personal writing of the course, I point to some of the more obvious ways that the students in this study fit the schemes laid out by these authors to offer the students' cognitive development as a potential explanation for their problems in personal writing. The cognitive development scheme shows how personal writing can be intellectually challenging for students, but also how it can move them to higher levels of development.

Perry and Belenky et al. both posit schemes for understanding college student cognitive development, differing primarily in that Perry focused his study on males and Belenky et al. on females. In both schemes, the student begins in a stage Perry terms “dualism” (66) and Belenky et al. term “received knowledge” (35). In this stage, the student sees the teacher as an Authority who possesses Truth. It is the student's job to

give back the Truth. After this stage, the student is able to move to “multiplicity” or “subjective knowledge” where he or she understands that there are a multitude of opinions with equal value. Then the student achieves “relativism” or “procedural knowledge” where he or she gains understanding of the processes involved in obtaining knowledge and the ways of using evidence to support a point. It is only after the students have progressed through these stages that they are able to achieve Commitments in relativism (“an affirmation of personal values in relativism”), or “constructed knowledge,” where he or she sees is able to clearly integrate external complexities with his or her own views. It is also only at this point that the students can tolerate ambiguity and complexity.

It is my opinion that a majority of the student participants in this study were at a dualistic stage. One means by which I come to this conclusion is from a phenonemon that occurred when graded quizzes were handed back to the students during the discussion section. In both discussion sections, Dr. Wilson and Rebecca asked the students that if they disagreed with an answer on the quiz. Both teachers welcomed argument with the quiz answers and offered to change students' grades if they could offer a good argument as to why their answer was correct. Dr. Wilson explained in the TA meeting that the purpose of this exercise was to give students practice in critical thinking. And yet, very few of the students ever objected. At most, four or five offered some half-hearted and fairly unconvincing arguments. In one instance, two students offered mild arguments to a question they got wrong. Rebecca, trying to encourage other students to argue with them, then asked how many people got it wrong, and almost every hand went up. Dualistic thinkers believe that there is only one right answer to a problem, so I speculate that the

students were somewhat baffled with the idea that the Authority (Dr. Wilson) could be wrong or that their own ideas could be right. In fact, one time after Rebecca was urging them to argue, a student raised her hand and asked “What are we supposed to be arguing?”

Dualistic thinkers are also “more apt to think of authorities, not friends, as sources of truth” (Belenky 39). This explains a problem students had with peer review – very few critiqued the content of each other's arguments, preferring to correct spelling and grammar, about which they knew they could be right. In our second interview Gaby said her peer reviewer “was like, 'I just found a few grammar errors, and that's about it.' She said it was well written. She's like, 'I don't know, I'm not a teacher!'” The students had trouble seeing themselves as worthy of evaluating each other's papers.

Another problem consistently mentioned in the TA meetings was the trouble with getting students to talk in the discussion sections. Belenky et al. distinguish dualistic women from dualistic men by noting that “Perry's dualistic men seem to lecture rather than listen” (45). Instead, “Women who rely on received knowledge think of words as central to the knowing process. They learn by listening” (37). Furthermore, “while received knowers can be very open to take in what others have to offer, they have little confidence in their own ability to speak” (37). This explains to some degree why the students in the primarily female discussion sections were hesitant to speak; they did not perceive their own contributions to the class as equally valid as their teachers'.

Furthermore, dualistic thinkers are highly motivated by grades. Often my first question in each interview was “How do you think the class is going?” and almost inevitably they would talk about grades. This is because received knowers believe that

“all knowledge originates outside the self” and “must look to others even for self-knowledge” (Belenky et al. 48). For example, in our third interview, I asked Gaby, “How do you think the semester went overall?” and she replied, “Pretty good, I did better on these [the last two papers] than I thought I was going to.” I asked Mia, “How do you think that class is going?” and she said, “This is one of my best classes, one of the best grades I'm getting” (Int. 3). They felt the correct knowledge of how the class was going was with the teacher, the Authority, who had the Truth.⁹

I suggest that the problems students had in writing were a reflection of the fact that they were dualistic thinkers, but the kind of writing required in the class required a higher level of cognitive development. Conducting research, the aspect of the writing that gave the students the most trouble, requires a variety of intellectual processes beyond dualism. One must be able to handle the complexity, variety, ambiguity, and conflicting ideas of various sources, choose which must be dismissed as irrelevant or incorrect, and synthesize and add one's own point of view – a cognitive process unavailable until the later stages of cognitive development. One must also consider various means to finding information. Students had a problem with overly specific search terms, looking instead for an article that matched their research topic word-for-word. In Perry's scheme, the second stage of development after Dualism is “Early Multiplicity,” where although the

⁹ Though I don't want to focus on specific cases, several of Cubeleg's interview comments do show her as a notable exception to this trend. She seemed to be more in the “subjective” or “procedural” knowledge levels, because she more obviously had a sense that the teacher's answer was not always “best” or “right.” She said that on the worksheets she was able to see that there was more than one correct answer: “You can find a parallel between any component and any piece of clothing. Sometimes one component works better than another. But really I've gotten the impression with this class that if you logically and clearly state how you were thinking about it, you'll get full credit” (Int. 2). She seemed somewhat uncomfortable still with the idea of more than one right answer: “In general, I like something that's provable. Sometimes, stuff that's not provable is more fun because you can throw out each justification and each idea and no one's really going to argue with you. Or at least in this class, for all the components and mechanisms, if you had a good idea and give a good justification for it, then it's the right answer” (Int. 3).

student may not have the “Right answer” he or she believes that “there exists a Right Way to find the Right answer” (3). Students may have been confused about how to “broaden” their searching, as Rebecca and the other TA's recommended.

Besides the research component, some assignments called for students to think about themselves in ways beyond their cognitive development. The I Believe statement, for example, actually seemed to ask students for their Commitments in relativism. Because they perhaps had not achieved his level, they relied on established Authorities, and hence platitudes such as “Everything happens for a reason” and “Mother knows best.” The T-Shirt, Love Loss, and Diversity Projects all asked students to discuss their methods of analysis, which is part of the “procedural knowledge,” or third stage of development where students understand the process of learning, far removed from the first stage of dualistic thinking. This was also the section on which the most students lost the most points, although students seemed able to articulate themselves in this section more clearly if they used the “I” voice.

Personal writing is intimately linked to cognitive development because the schemes relate to how the students see themselves in relation to the world. If anything, the role of personal writing in the scheme shows that it is much more intellectually rigorous than perhaps it is typically given credit for. I conclude that personal writing be used as a teaching tool to support students, as Perry puts it, “in the choice to use their competence to orient themselves though Commitments (238).” Perry recommends two specific ways of doing this, both of which I saw demonstrated to some extent in Dr. Wilson's class. First, Perry recommends “a special realization of Community,” where the teacher and students see themselves in the same boat of trying to work out their

commitments. Perry says that educators should show “their own thinking, groping, doubts, and styles of Commitment” (239). Dr. Wilson's sharing of her I Believe statement on the first day of the lecture section of class certainly modeled such thinking, and doing the assignment along with the students was an example of her placing herself in their community. The I Believe assignment itself was a call to the students to consider the ways that they have made or are moving towards Commitments (however cliché).

I also believe that Dr. Wilson modeled her “making of meaning” (Perry 239) through the many stories she told to the class about her own experiences with writing and as a student. For example, in the discussion section, she told the students that they should try to paraphrase instead of quoting directly. She said she learned that “your own words are better” when her dissertation director told her that she had quoted too much and she had to spend an entire summer going through the dissertation and putting everything in her own words. Other stories about her past teaching experiences and working with students as well as her formative experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer modeled for the students how she came to Commitments in relativism.

Personal writing can also be linked to the recommendation of Belenky et al. for women's education because of its validation of personal experience. They write that most of their interviewees “made it clear that they did not wish to be told merely that they had the capacity or potential to *become* knowledgeable or wise. They needed to know that they already knew something and (although by no means everything), that there was something good inside them” (195). This is the domain of personal writing that Dr. Wilson's class seems to amplify: the T-Shirt Project and the Love Loss Project in particular validate the students' experience as “something good” by viewing those

experiences as worthy of research and close examination.

V. CONCLUSION

In this final section, I give an overview of the outcomes of the course. I first address how the assignments in the class alleviated many of the common problems associated with personal writing, especially with respect to the ethical position of the teacher as counselor. I discuss several shortcomings of the class: the students' lack of understanding about the functions of personal writing and the way their identities conflicted with the academic materials. Finally, I recommend further avenues for research in the field of writing across the curriculum and this class in particular.

Dr. Wilson's unique use of the personal addresses many of the criticisms traditionally leveled against personal writing. In "Ethical Issues Raised by Students' Personal Writing," Dan Morgan discusses his ethical dilemma when reading a student's paper about her decision to stay in an abusive relationship. As a reader, he was primarily concerned with the students well-being, but as a teacher he felt obligated to comment on the numerous grammatical, structural, and argumentative flaws of the paper (320). He asks, "[D]o I work to help this student write a *better* paper about how a person should continue staying in a relationship with an abusive crack addict?" (320). But in Dr. Wilson's assignments, the teacher is relieved of the responsibility of judging the student's experience; instead, the teacher recognizes the writing as a representation, and evaluates the writing of the frames of experience. As Kamler says, when teachers recognize the "discursive space" opened up by seeing the text as a representation rather than as the student, the text becomes one which can be scrutinized and rewritten (59). The goal of this kind of writing is not to get at the truth of what happened or even to listen for an authentic voice, but instead to understand a larger sense of the production of the text

(Kamler 60). For example, in Dr. Wilson's grading rubrics, the questions asked of the text surround the writer's representation of an experience, rather than the writer herself: Has this writer thoroughly discussed her process of research? Has she "framed" her experience appropriately, using relevant research and correct citation? Does she represent her experience in thoughtful and reflective ways?

Furthermore, Dr. Wilson's assignments give students enough guidance so they don't turn in material that might put the teacher in a difficult position, without putting words in their mouths. In the Love Loss Project students, structured their work around articles of clothing. In the Diversity Project, they found academic articles they could argue for or against using their experience. They got to choose what information and evidence to use, but the teachers choose the topic and scope. This move becomes especially important for a writing-in-the-disciplines class, because personal writing can be matched up with relevant content. Personal writing was most effective when it was in conjunction with academic aspects of writing – research, formality, citations, and so forth.

The particular kind of research writing in the Diversity Project could be a useful tool for thinking about a new way for students to write research papers. It might be more productive for students to compare something they did of their own initiative with the research, instead of just regurgitating the research. Students in Perry's "dualistic" phase might have difficulty expressing their "own" opinion, so by asking them to conduct their own research, they are more likely to feel authoritative when they do express an opinion.

The personal academic writing in Dr. Wilson's class also teaches students how to be observant and thoughtful of even mundane objects like t-shirts. As the philosophy

behind the personal academic argument is that the personal is valuable enough to have a role in academic argument, the mundane is every bit as useful as the extraordinary. Patricia Sullivan urges teachers to become “scholars of the ordinary” (84), showing students how they can shape everyday, generic experience into great writing. When I asked Emily what she learned at the end of the semester, she said, “Walking down the street if I see people dressed a different way, I'll think that maybe it's not just because they like it, maybe it's part of their culture. [This class] will help me in the sense because I just have more knowledge about the reasons people dress the way they do” (Int. 3). In short, she learned how to appreciate the social and cultural constructions of dress in everyday life.

One way of evaluating students thinking is giving them free reign to use the “I” pronoun. In Dr. Wilson's class, this seemed to encourage students to make their thinking transparent. Discussions of how and why the “I” pronoun can be used are also important. Though the “I” may be inappropriate for finished products in certain disciplines, it might be extremely useful on a rough draft to show students' processes and ask them to reflect, particularly in a discipline such as textile and apparel management, where such reflection is important.

Despite these many positive outcomes, the class was not without its shortcomings. I believe that Dr. Wilson had excellent reasons for using personal writing, but I don't believe the students quite understood them. It might have helped the students to know why the I Believe statement was important to the functioning of the course, or how the stories were an essential part of the Love Loss Project. They needed to know why personal writing was valued in the course because it's not just important to teach the

discourse of the discipline, but also its values. In a study of the way that first-year composition affected students' writing in WAC class, Anderson et al. call for “a cross-curricular effort” to help students learn to analyze “the particular discourse communities in which our work is evaluated,” be they composition courses or otherwise (27). Instead of making assumptions about the discourse communities of their disciplines, composition programs need to teach students how to analyze the thinking of another discourse community, and write accordingly. To succeed in Dr. Wilson's class, a student doesn't necessarily have to have a lot of experience with personal writing, but he or she does need to see that personal writing can lead to the sort of analytical and critical thinking valued in that discipline.

Hesford writes of the struggle between students' identities; nowhere was this more prevalent than when they were attempting to negotiate the boundaries of personal and academic discourse. When personal writing was less guided, such as in the I Believe statements, students seemed to have a more difficult time finding a topic. Students need models for how to make smart choices when including personal stories and when using the “I” pronoun. Research textbooks often talk about the kinds of sources make for good academic support – perhaps more attention should be paid to what personal anecdotes make for good evidence as well.

Spigelman and Hesford would likely agree with me that the dichotomy I keep drawing between “personal” and “academic” is a false one, and its a dichotomy that creates problems for students. For the most part, students did not understand the idea that their own thinking *can* be a part of a scholarly conversation. The most unfortunate rendering of the personal has been the way personal writing becomes the subject – “me”

and the “mine” — and the academic writing becomes the object – “they” and “them.”

Assignments that ask students to draw connections between the two may be the best way to get students to understand how they are related, and move them to higher levels of cognitive development.

This class presented a variety of researchable areas, and I had difficulty focusing just on personal writing. The art of the Love Loss books would have been an excellent opportunity to study how creating the books contributed to the writing of the stories and the research papers. I would have also liked to examine the revision process in this class, because almost unanimously my interviewees said that peer review helped them very little, either because their peer reviewer did not comment extensively on their work or because they already knew what the peer reviewer told them. Observing the TA meetings sparked my interest in the way a seasoned professor helps and mentors new teaching assistants, particularly in regard to passing on teaching and pedagogic philosophies. Because the University of Missouri Campus Writing Program strongly recommends these meetings for professors and teaching assistants of writing-intensive courses, a study of their efficacy would be very helpful. The class was predominantly female, creating a potentially fruitful link between gender and the types of writing in the course. Finally, I would have liked to study how the telling of stories in classes helps students learn. Dr. Wilson, Rebecca, the teaching assistants, and the students all told a lot of stories in class and I would have liked to examine how that affected the use of story in their writing.

Chris Anson calls for ethnographies to help create a vocabulary for kinds of writing in WAC, which opens up another possibility for research to distinguish forms of personal writing, and the benefits and drawbacks of each. My study shows that the

differences in structure and expectations of what we broadly define as personal writing in actuality varies wildly, and by not terming those different uses we are less able to accentuate their usefulness. If we are to discuss the uses of these different kinds of personal in a faculty WAC workshop, we will need a clear definition for the kind of personal writing we are talking about, and research to back up what we see as their benefits and drawbacks, before we can convince faculty that such writing could be used in their class. I also see a need for study of how composition pedagogies intersect with writing across the curriculum. Dr. Wilson's assignments reflect the views of many compositionists, despite the fact that she has not read their work. I see many opportunities for looking at the way composition pedagogy is “played out” in other disciplines. I was especially attracted to “Cross-Curricular Underlife” by Anderson et al., where the students themselves wrote about how their composition class influenced their writing in other classes.

My study shows how the umbrella term of “personal writing” carries the baggage of an expressivist pedagogy that sees it as the unproblematic rendering of “true” experience, when it can actually be used in reflective and critical ways to teach a way of thinking in certain disciplines. Although the assignments of the class I studied make good use of the way that students' lives intersect with the classroom, class discussion was often based on student experience too, which to me meant that the philosophy of the importance of the personal was not limited only to written work. One day in Rebecca's discussion, everyone told stories of times they had encountered cultural differences in traveling or studying abroad. When Dr. Wilson discussed consumerism in American culture, she took a survey of the students' spending habits and used it to lead discussion.

The English 1000 website I cited in my introduction states that students must write papers that extend *beyond* personal experience, as though personal experience were a static entity that one moves away from in his or her progression as a writer, but I ultimately argue that the shifting nature of identity means that the personal is always and necessarily with us, in the classroom and in our writing, from the composition class to the writing-intensive class, and into the real world beyond.

APPENDIX A

TAM 2500

Social Appearance in Time and Space

“This I believe” Discussion Group Assignment

Tell a story: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching -- it can even be funny -- but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.

Be brief: Your statement should be between 100 and 250 words.

Name your belief: If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on a core belief.

Be positive: Tell us what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Make your essay about you; speak in the first person.

Be personal: Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

Examples: You can find examples of what others wrote in the following website. Use them for inspiration but please think about your own beliefs and write your own statement.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4538138>

Due: August 28-31 (Depending on your discussion section.)

APPENDIX B

TAM 2500

Social Appearance in Time and Space

Fall 2006

The T-Shirt Project

Oral Presentation

Select a T-shirt from your collection that best represents something interesting about you. Bring the T-shirt to class on the assigned day (be sure to check the syllabus. Each student will have three minutes to tell the class about their T-shirts from a short outline that you will turn in to your instructor with a sketch of the T-shirt.

Data Collection and Analysis

As each student tells the class about their T-shirts, the other students will write the T-shirt number, the name of the student, a very short description of the shirt, and identify some themes that emerge from the “telling.” This information is best collected in chart form so it can be easily transferred to Excel or another a spread-sheet program.

Once all the T-shirts have been presented, each student should read and re-read the notes to identify “emergent themes” that have appeared during this sharing process. The resulting themes (data) must then be entered in a computer-generated matrix, graph or chart (Excel is a good program to use for this process.) In addition, consider the way that the study population may have affected your findings.

Research Paper

Each student will write a 3-4 page paper that describes the study method, the themes that emerged, and the conclusions you have drawn from your observations with support from “T-shirts as wearable diary” by Cornwell and/or other sources. Include the matrix or graph with the paper (this will be a 4th or 5th page). Be sure to include citations and a reference list using *the APA Manual of Style*, *the MLA Style Manual*, or *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Due Date:

Peer Review, October 10-16 in Discussion

Final Paper, October 17-23 in Discussion

APPENDIX C

TAM 2500
Social Appearance in Time and Space
Fall 2006
Project: Love, Loss, and What I Wore

Part I

Create your own book *Love, Loss, and What I Wore* that includes at least ten garments worn by you, members of your family, or your friends. You need not limit the images to dress worn by females. Include a story in your book, like Beckerman's, about the clothing you have chosen to illustrate. Do the illustrations and write about them before going on to the next parts of the assignment. (See the illustration and story in my example).

Part II

Once you have created the book, provide the historical and social/cultural context about the dress on **five** of the garments/form of dress included in your story. This is the most involved part of this project since it requires you to document the historical and social/cultural context with a variety of references. Textbooks and articles are the best sources of information about the social/cultural context. History books and Websites may be used to document the place of each form of dress during the time it was used. However, the best sources to explore history are primary sources (materials produced during the time under study) such as magazines from the period you wore the clothing. See the attached example to see the sources I used to write about the social/cultural, historical, and personal contexts of the clothing I wrote about in my story.

Part III

Use Hamilton's metatheory model to identify one component and one mechanism that were the primary reasons for including those particular garments/form of dress in your book. Now discuss the interactions between the component and the mechanism.

Part IV (This section is not included in my example)

Finally, consider what you have learned by doing this project. What did you learn about the role dress plays in a cultural system? How do you feel about the project now that it is completed? How have others with whom you may have talked about it (friends, family, professors) responded when you described it to them? How do you feel differently about this assignment than you did when you began to work on it?

Technical Requirements:

The stories in your book may be handwritten but all other work must be typed. Cite all sources in the body of your paper and include a list of references at the end. The recommended citation format is a parenthetical citation (Beckerman, 1995) as shown in the *APA Style Manual* and the *MLA Style Manual*. The recommended reference citation is:

Beckerman, Ilene. (1995). *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

Due Dates:

Nov. 6-9 Peer Review of the finished book (Part I) and a draft of the paper (Parts II, III, & IV) in discussion

Nov. 13-16 Final Project due in discussion

APPENDIX D

TAM 2500 Social Appearance in Time and Space Fall 2006

Project: Using the Components and Mechanisms of Culture to Understand Diversity Related to Dress

This project focuses on the mechanisms and components of culture as they influence the dress of someone who is generationally or ethnically different from you. (Students who are biracial or adopted by those of another race should choose to investigate yet another ethnicity.) Write a paper no longer than four double-spaced, typewritten pages in no smaller than 10 point pitch. Be sure to include complete citations in the body of your paper and provide a list of references you used to develop your paper. You may use the *APA Style Manual*, *MLA Style Manual*, or *The Chicago Manual of Style* for citations and the bibliography.

Step 1: Select at least *two* articles from **academic** journals that report the results of research about dress and social/cultural behavior concerning the ethnic or age group you have selected as your topic. Some journals that are likely to have these kinds of articles are *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, *Urban Anthropology*, *Journal of Black Studies*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, *Home Economics Research Journal*, *The International Migration Review*, *The Sociological Journal Quarterly*, and *American Sociological Review*. One way to find articles in journals would be to use *The Clothing Index* (TT 490 .C59 Reference) or INFOTRAC under key words describing your topic.

Step 2: Write a summary of the content of the two articles you read. This must be done before your interview.

Step 3: Explore at least one secondary source to become better informed about the culture of the interviewee. For example, to prepare for an interview with an elderly great aunt, magazines or books about the time period when she was your age and older would be appropriate. To prepare for an interview with someone from another cultural system, use magazines or newspapers from that individual's culture or books about that culture.

Step 4: Write a summary of findings from those secondary sources.

Step 5: Use ideas generated by your study of the two research articles and the secondary cultural sources to develop at least two domains of inquiry (the themes from which the questions were drawn) related to the subject of dress that you can explore with your interviewee. These domains of inquiry should be related to the components and mechanisms of culture, which we have been studying all semester.

Step 6: Write a discussion of the process you used to develop the domains of inquiry for your interview and your plan to analyze the data you collect. This comprises the method section of the paper.

Step 7: Using your refined domains of inquiry and questions, interview a person who is ethnically different or a person who is at least two generations older than yourself. This person should be someone with whom you can talk comfortably, who you believe will be reflective and forthcoming, and who understands this is part of a major project and will give you at least an hour of focused time. Consider how you will record the interview data.

Step 8: Write a description of your findings and discuss their importance. What components and mechanisms did you identify as relevant in your findings as a result of your interview data? How were the results of your interview data consistent or inconsistent with the findings reported in the journal articles or your initial expectations? What might account for the differences?

Step 9: Write a description of (a) what you could have done differently to generate better results from this project and (b) what you learned about yourself from doing this project.

Step 10: Write an introduction and insert it in front of the summaries.

Due Date: **Paper due, November 27- 30 in discussion**

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE CODING – INTERVIEW

Interviewee: Cubeleg

Student in Dr. Brown's class/Second interview

Date and Time of Interview: 10/31/06, 2pm

Location: Bookmark Cafe, Ellis Library

Note: “F” refers to Faith Kurtyka, “C” refers to Cubeleg, the interviewee. The codes are written after the sentence to which they pertain, in parentheses.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT:

F: What did you think of the different presentations?

C: They were the typical boring class presentations, honestly. Just learned a little bit about everyone's history. In some ways, it's so much information, you could never remember it all. So you have to take notes. Use what you could. (Defining Research, Defining the Personal)

F: How did you decide how to categorize the different information?

C: Well first of all, I just took notes on everything, I didn't even try to categorize them. Then when I tried to put it all in an Excel spreadsheet. I interpreted her instructions one way, then I looked back to the examples in her slide presentations, and I saw that she had meant for us to do – We had our t-shirt and I thought she wanted us to put the categories like this [makes sideways motion with hands] and then to tally them up but what she actually wanted us to do was put the categories along the top and then put time marks underneath each category that each t-shirt fell into and then tally them up. (Organization, Defining Research, Grading)

F: How did you decide on those categories?

C: I just looked at what the t-shirts were and I thought of trying to separate them into different categories. (Organization)

F: Was that hard or easy?

C: Not too hard because I realized that there's not one right answer. So I just came up with a good one. (Grading)

F: How long did it take you to put it all into the paper?

C: Probably two or three hours. I went through and I took her evaluation form, and I used that to make an outline, and then I made sure I filled in each part of the outline. (Organization)

F: Was it difficult?

C: No. Basically, all our research had been done for us. The class presentation, the excel spreadsheets and everything. So it wasn't that hard to basically regurgitate everything we had been told. For the project I'm doing right now we have to do all our own research – it's hard to figure out what counts and what doesn't. (Defining Research, Student Difficulties)

F: Were there any strategies or techniques that you used to write the paper?

C: Basically I went by the grading rubric that she gave us and I used that to make a fairly detailed outline and then filled it out as I went. As I was kind of looking at all the information, I came up with a thesis statement, which actually helped focus you a lot on what you're going to say because there's so much you could say. (Grading, Organization, Making an Argument)

F: Did you ask for help?

C: No. (Asking for Help)

F: What parts were easier and what parts were more difficult?

C: [long pause as she looks through the paper] The hard part was limiting how many people i talked about – choosing which ones to include and which ones not to include.

Probably an easy part was doing the bibliography, because once I did once, all I had to do was change the name for the other ones. (Student Difficulties)

F: So you used a lot of examples?

C: I did use a lot of examples. I don't know whether that's good or bad yet because I don't have my grade. (Grading)

F: Did you like writing it?

C: [Laughs slightly] It wasn't too bad. It wasn't that hard. I enjoy writing about things I feel strongly about. . . . Once I figured out my thesis that there's this kind of ambiguity in our culture. Some people say, “We're getting more fluid, we're going everywhere, we're not developing strong relationships like we used to,” and yet at the same time, overwhelmingly friends and family were the most important thing people talked about. And then that whole tension between real and ideal culture. Maybe it's just ideally their friends and family are most important, but their time shows they value other things. And it's really hard to say what's the cause and what's the effect. That was an interesting thing to me, and once I figured out that that was going to be my thesis, it made it a little more interesting to write. (Defining the Personal, Making an Argument)

F: So you did the outline and then you did the thesis?

C: Yeah, basically I did the outline, and I knew I needed a paragraph on this and a paragraph on that, I needed to have my body, I needed an introduction, I needed to cover

the sample groups. I needed to cover two or three different examples, and I needed a conclusion. So I looked at my data. I don't remember when I came up with my thesis, but once I did I looked online for just a basic statistic I could cite about how many times people move in their lifetime. So I used that as my introduction. (Organization)

F: Did you do any other research for this paper?

C: Not really. I mean, there was the paper she had us read in the course packet, and we'd already read that, so I was able to cite from there to show where the whole idea of a t-shirt project came from. (Defining Research)

F: So how do you think the work you did on this paper compares to papers you did in the past?

C: In some ways, a paper on a book or a paper on a topic is very different because you have this general topic, and then you go and research it just to find out all sorts of information about it. Then you take lots of notes and you figure out what your paper is going to be about. But for this one it was more like we were given the information in class rather than doing our own research and then we wrote up the information. (Defining Research)

F: Which kind would you prefer?

C: I don't know. In some ways, it's easier because it's less time-consuming. In some ways, I like the other way better because you can tailor it more towards your interests. (Defining the Personal)

F: How do you feel like the class is going overall?

C: Well, right now it's really hard. Because we're supposed to be doing research on a bunch of different things for our next big paper that we'll turn in. There's basically five

different topics that we have to cover for five different dresses or items of clothing, for our LLW project. So we have a historical context, which I pretty much figured out. I've gone and looked in magazines and stuff from the historical time period of the clothing. I figured that part out. And I figured out the components and mechanisms and interactions, of all the metatheory, which she's been talking about all semester, so that's not hard. The part that's really got me stumped right now is the social/cultural context. And in some ways, it's so broad, I don't even know where to start and in some ways it's so narrow that I can't seem to find anything that fits it. (Defining Research, Making Connections)

F: Can you give me an example of one of the garments you're doing and what you've done so far?

C: Yes, I can show you. [She pulls the completed book out of her bag] These are the clothes. So I wrote my little story. If you want to take the time to read it, you're more than welcome. I finished the book probably three or four weeks ago. Because as soon as she told us about it first day in class, she said "You better start working on it" so I started working on it. I did two pages each weekend. Do not ask me to cram! Because I will become paralyzed. And like this was a dress I made with grandma, my first sewing project, I was about 8 or 9. Then it's just a favorite shirt. I did crazy things like make clothes out of newspapers for my six younger brothers and sisters! [She's included the t-shirt she showed in class] (Defining the Personal, Stories)

F: Can you give me an example of the historical context that you found for one of these so far?

C: For this one [points to the picture of the swimming suit], I went and I looked up Land's End magazine. I pulled out one of the catalogs we have right now. And I decided that one

of the statements they had about quality, they really emphasized – they said “this is so tough that it can go through one kid and be fresh for the next kid,” which is the same sort of philosophy they adopted towards swimming suits, which I bought this suit in 2003. I was not able to find a 2003 Land's End Catalog to look at, because our family throws away things, because they're not useful anymore. But I did find online the exact same model they're selling, it's just a different color. I also went back and looked at Vogue magazine and in the year 2000, I found a swimsuit with very similar design, and I used that. Like this one I went back and looked in Harper's Bazaar and Good Housekeeping for examples of handkerchief skirt. I think that was just two years ago. And I still have this one. I still wear it because I love it. I also – because I made this outfit myself, I cited the pattern. I didn't realize This before, but patterns have copyright year, usually the year you bought it. So I was able to date when I got these patterns. This one was 2004, this one was 1995. So I think we had found a pattern someone else had to make the dress. Basically, I cited the patterns. And I think that will work, because it was something that was produced during that time period. [Explains the packaging of patterns] I've never seen ramifications for how you cite patterns, so I just sort of came up with something like – I included the title of the pattern, then the copyright year, and who it was distributed by, and the pattern number. (Defining Research)

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE CODING – FIELDNOTES

FIELDNOTES

Dr. Brown's Discussion Section, Observation #3, 9/12/06, 11am

Note: "Dr. Brown" was the pseudonym I used for Dr. Wilson. My IRB approval states that I will use her pseudonym in my notes. The codes are written after the sentence to which they pertain, in parentheses.

The class begins with Dr. Brown passing back quizzes and homework. She mentions that she doesn't have a quiz for Heather and Heather says, "I didn't go to any classes last week." Dr. B goes over the quiz. She says that the quizzes are there to make sure the student is attending lecture, and cannot be made up. She underscores this with a story about a student who emailed her because she missed class due to a hit and run. (Stories) Dr. Brown goes through all the quiz answers and explains them.

She says that the item most people got wrong was: "American culture is highly integrated." This is false, because American culture contains sub-groups. The average score was 21/30, which in my opinion is not that good. Dr. Brown says that "very few people didn't miss at least two." Dr. Brown says, "I try to be fair and I don't always make it. One of my most important values is being fair." (Grading, Teaching Philosophy)

Next, we discuss the Metatheory assignment. Dr. Brown says, looking at the roster, "I'm gonna learn some more names today!" We first talk about "Cultural Components." "Technology" is first - the students were to list 3 components of culture and tell how each is important in regard to dress. Some examples include machines, inventory, and fibers. (Making Connections)

Next is social structure. The examples the students give are the dress of religion, age, and gender. Dr. Brown is very nice if a student gives an incorrect answer. She calls on the student next to me, and she says “I didn’t really have an example.” Then she reads what she wrote and it’s just the definition copied directly out of the reading. (Student Difficulties) The worksheet very specifically asks you to make the link between the component of culture and dress. The story for this component is of Jake the TA. Dr. Brown noticed he had holes in his jeans. She commented on it, and he said that he was running late, and not wanting to wait for his clothes to dry, he just put his jeans in the microwave, whereupon the buttons caught fire and burned holes in his jeans. Dr. Brown laughs a LOT - “my mother used to always laugh till she cried, and I do that too” she says. (Stories, Making Connections)

On to “Ideology.” When Dr. Brown calls on her, one student says, “I was kinda confused, if you explain it, I’ll give you an example.” Dr. Brown does so. (Making Connections) The story for ideology is that when she was a college student at Montana State in the 1960’s, you could count on your grade getting lowered if you showed up to class in pants instead of a skirt. (Stories)

We move on to Mechanisms of Culture. The first one we talk about it “Economic.” The example given is how we spend our money. Dr. Brown asks the class if anyone buys second hand clothing, and if anyone is a tightwad. (Using Student Experience) One says that she goes to the mall once a week but doesn’t always buy something. What she’s doing is finding personal stories to link to the concepts and terms. (Making Connections, Stories)

Next is political organization. The students can only think of very overtly political

example, like the government regulating dress, and military clothing. (Making Connections, Student Difficulties) Dr. Brown says that Disney and Barbie both highly regulate their brands. She says she used to teach a section of this class on Barbie, and they used to find websites where people would use Barbie as a mechanism to talk about the role of women in culture. Then, apparently, Mattel sued all those people. (Stories, Making Connections) One student says, “How can we not mix communication and politics?” And Dr. Brown points out that we can “mix” many of the categories.

Next is Family/Kinship. We learn how to dress from our parents. Heather says, “I don’t know if this is right,” and she talks about how family’s expectations for dress in church are passed down through generations. (Stories) Dr. Brown tells a story about her mother. She says that when she dresses for “professional presentations,” she wears her mother’s wedding band because although her mother passed away in 1988, she believes her mother would be very proud of her. Her own wedding band is a “Montana Sapphire,” symbolizing not only her kinship to her husband but to the place she lives. She says her mother’s wedding band also symbolizes her father. He was leaning on the rail of an aircraft carrier looking at the ring in the box. The box slipped out of his hand and he lost the box, but held onto the ring. (Stories)

Next is socialization. Cubeleg originally volunteered an answer back in “social structure” that was children learning to sew from their parents. Dr. Brown tells her to say it now, because it’s an example of socialization and not social structure. (Making Connections, Stories) The girl next to me prefaces her comment by saying “I don’t know if I was on the right track.” Dr. Brown warns the class that it’s easy to mix up socialization and social structure, and warns them about doing so in their Love, Loss

projects. Also distinguish it from “socializing.”

We talk briefly about examples of “Ideological Organization” -- lucky objects, wedding rings, and wearing a cross around your neck, Arts and Aesthetics -- Couture, Costumes, and Communications - t-shirts! This prompts Dr. Brown to remind the class to bring their t-shirts next week. With a class of 27, each person will only have two minutes to speak.

FIELDNOTES

Dr. Brown's Discussion Section, Observation #7, 10/10/07, 11am

Dr. Brown comments that people may be skipping class because they don't have their work done (the students have a draft due for peer review today).

Dr. Brown begins going over the quiz, saying “Only one person in this room got 100%!” The answer to the first question is metatheory, and when a student says why she put down meta-theory as an answer, Dr. Brown says “You got the right answer for the wrong reason” (Grading). Another student says she memorized the definition but doesn't know what it means. (There are 3-4 latecomers – today, Dr. Brown doesn't call them out). Dr. Brown questions why so many people got the fourth question wrong (the answer was “technology”) (Grading). One student says that she “forgot the third one.” I wonder how anyone could “forget” technology, social structure, and ideology because the instructors have talked about them at pretty much every class. (Criticizing Students) Heather says she missed it because the way it was worded didn't make sense to her. Dr. Brown is interested in why people miss questions (Grading, Teaching Philosophy) The seventh question was one that apparently a lot of people got wrong. The question was in regard to whether or not Japanese people ever acted in individualistic ways. The answer was “yes,”

because as Cubeleg brings up, they do so in college. Dr. Brown connects it to the Amish tradition of Rumspringa. Question number nine is interesting for my purposes: “The step that enables researchers and readers to understand what data means.” The answer is “interpretation.” To demonstrate this, Dr. Brown asks the students what “facts” they collected for their papers. “Ages, themes, what tees are people's favorites, the demographics of the class” are all answers. Dr. Brown asks, “What is interpretation?” and a student answers “what value they hold to the t-shirt holder.” Yes, Dr. Brown says, and writes, “meanings/values” on the board (Defining Research) The next question is true/false: “There is no relationship between kimonos and the McBay reading.” Cubeleg justifies the truth of this by saying, “Anything can have a relationship.” (Making Connections)

Dr. Brown asks if anyone wants to challenge anything on the quiz. A student wants to challenge #7 because it refers directly to bun, where she says everyone acts as a whole and there is interdependence. Dr. Brown says she will consider it later with the TA's. (Making an Argument)

Time for peer review! (It's about 20-25 minutes until the end of the class.) She passes out the peer review sheet, which is the same grading rubric she and the TA's will use to grade the students' final projects. (Grading, Revision) With their final projects, they are to turn in their oral presentation outline and their graph. One of the questions she says she wants them to look for: “Was the topic and thesis interesting?” She asks them what the thesis is, and one student says that it's “the main idea or direction of the paper.” (Defining Good Writing, Making an Argument) She also talks about what she's looking for in the methods section. “How did you analyze your data?” she asks. “How we sat in

class?" one student offers. "Read through it, saw what it had in common, grouped it," another student says. "Be more specific!" Dr Brown implores them. "We made an Excel spreadsheet," another says, finally. Dr. Brown says that they should say that specifically in their paper. She says that part of the process was picking important themes, and if you had a t-shirt that only fit one theme, then it's not a very good example. She asked what the students can "use as evidence," meaning what readings they can use. "T-Shirts as Wearable Diary," one student says. Dr. Brown tells them they can also use the Hamilton Metatheory and the Robertson piece, but when she asks who did, no one raises their hands. (Defining Research)

An implication I just thought of: Could all the papers in this class look the same? Granted, no papers will look the same between sections, but technically all the students in this class could write the same paper. This is an interesting implication for the definition of the personal. How does the personal become public? How does the personal get narrowed in this class? (Defining the Personal)

As for citations, the students are to cite their references as well as the people in class both in text and on the Works Cited page. They are only to use the first names of the students. For example

Jadrien, Presentation, Sept. 2006

Or in-text: (Jadrien, 2006) (Defining Research)

Cubeleg asks if they have to quote and Dr. Brown responds, "You don't have to use quotes. Paraphrases are fine. Paraphrases are better." She tells a story about two students who studies abroad in England and took a class where they had to do a lot of writing. They were hoping that the writing would count for their WI class. Dr. Brown had

them present their work to the WI board, who said that it was “plagiarism by quote” -- meaning that they quoted too much. Now, Dr. Brown says, she warns her students against quoting too much – your own words are better (Stories, Empowering students, Defining Research). She says she had the same problem with her dissertation – her advisor said she quoted too much and she had to spend a summer going back and putting everything in her own words. She says that a good place to use exact quotes is the primary source – when you quote from a presentation. (Stories)

As the student begin peer review, she tells them to “grade really hard” and “be hard on each other.” The students pass their papers one person to the left. She says “Look for incomplete sentences” and “First person is fine.” As they work, she walks around and looks over their shoulders. Looking around the classroom, I can see that the students are writing a fair amount in the margins as well as on the peer review sheets, even though there isn't a place for it. (Defining the Personal, Revision, Teaching Philosophy, Grading)

Interviews

“Cubeleg.” Interviewed September 1, October 31, December 8, 2006.

“Emily.” Interviewed September 6, October 27, December 7, 2006.

“Gaby.” Interviewed September 1, October 27, December 8, 2006.

“Heather.” Interviewed September 2, November 3, December 14, 2006.

“Rebecca.” (TA) Interviewed August 22, November 9, December 13, 2006.

Dr. Wilson. Interviewed August 28, November 6, December 12, 2006.

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