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

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ABSTRACT

This study reports the results of a semester-long ethnography of a writing-intensive textile and apparel management class that uses personal academic argument. Tracing the changing definition of the personal through the writing assignments, and examining the professor's evaluation of papers showed that personal writing was used to teach students the critical thinking necessary for careers in textile and apparel management. Student interviews show that students enjoy personal writing but do not always understand why it is important, and tend to see research as an imposition on personal writing. The writing itself reveals that in blending the personal and the academic, students were able to adopt the position of a genuine researcher, gain self-awareness, and acquire a sense of their own social and cultural constructions. Finally, the study shows how the assignments in the class alleviated many of the problems commonly associated with personal writing, and concludes that personal writing has a rightful place in the composition curriculum because of the nuanced ways it is being used in writing across the curriculum.