Project Report

Self-Presentation in Inquiry-Based Writing, or
"Who Am I to Tell Her How She Should Write This Essay?"

Table of Contents

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Summary

During the course of this project, I examined twelve pieces of writing in order to learn more about self-presentation in students' inquiry-based papers and peer responses. Work by Thomas Newkirk (composition theory), William Zeiger and Douglas Hesse (literary and personal nonfiction theory), Roger Cherry (concepts of persona and Aristotelian *ethos*), Susan C. Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds (feminist readings of *ethos*), and Susan V. Wall and Julie Nelson Christoph (assessing author *ethos* in specific written texts) influenced my analysis, as did the Evergreen Thinking Rubric developed by former Evergreen research director David B. Marshall. I focused on identifying and examining aspects of writer self-presentation, including unexpected embedded learning "vignettes" representing student practices related to learning and knowledge making.

Purpose

This research examines students' presentations of themselves in informal papers and peer responses posted in the online "classroom" of a course combining art and women's studies, the electronic component of an otherwise face-to-face learning community. I was particularly interested in employing scholarly work on *ethos* as a lens through which to look at the ways students are overtly present as knowledge makers in informal inquiry-based weekly writing.[1]

The present investigation is part of a larger Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) project of observing student work in making knowledge together in learning community settings, reflecting on what I find, and directing results back into teaching practices and products. Assessment of students' written rhetorical strategies has been my overall approach in this work, as I develop ways to teach and evaluate writing more effectively in an interdisciplinary and cooperative learning environment.[2]

Relevant Evergreen Principles and Goals for Learning

Evergreen courses and programs are expected to coalesce around the Five Foci, three of which are particularly relevant to this project: "collaborative learning," "personal engagement," and "linking theory with practical applications" ("What"). The six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate include three centered in effective inquiry and communication: "communicate

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[1] In this paper I use "inquiry" in its general sense, to mean something akin to "exploratory" and "divergent." William Zeiger, whose work I call on below, uses the term more specifically in reference to "recogniz[ing] and weigh[ing] alternatives" ("Exploratory" 458) and "testing and turning" ideas ("Exploratory" 460).

[2] Evergreen "programs" (half-time or full-time classes) are built around the coordinated study model of learning community, in which work – usually work across academic disciplines – is integrated. Faculty generally team teach, and collaboration among all program participants is strongly valued. While pedagogical styles vary, many faculty plan a variety of learning activities emphasizing group problem-solving and other applications of "hands on" learning approaches. For more information about learning communities, see the Learning Communities page of the National Learning Commons, at the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education website, http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/lcfaq.htm .

creatively and effectively;" "demonstrate integrative, independent, critical thinking;" and "apply qualitative, quantitative and creative modes of inquiry appropriately to practical and theoretical problems across disciplines." In addition, graduates are expected to know how to "participate collaboratively and responsibly in our diverse society" and how to "articulate and assume responsibility for [their] own work" ("Evergreen").

Background

Why this project?

I frequently teach women's studies and disability studies, fields in which questions of self, identity and community, and particularly of the social and individual constructions of these concepts and experiences, are foregrounded. Students in these programs often grapple with issues related to the role of the personal in academic work, and to self-presentation in the classroom, as they find that what they learn illuminates their lives and thought. As a faculty, I am interested in the ways personal presence and experience shape learning, and also in students' conceptions of their task of making knowledge in an academic environment.

In previous SOTL work to observe students' strategies of collaborative knowledge making through responses written to other students' papers, I observed that many, and probably most, students whose writing I analyzed would

> . . . benefit from explicit instruction and practice in working with ideas, specifically directed toward methods of building on another's work in [divergent] ways that open ideas and theories outward, into broader and deeper thinking. (Sandoz *Project* 8)

I also noted an obvious writer presence in the peer responses, and wondered whether students may "tend to substitute . . . social bonding or personal reactions for actively moving observations [i.e., summaries] of ideas toward interpretation . . ." (Sandoz *Project* 8).[3]

A final reason I am interested in student writing and issues related to the personal and knowledge making in postsecondary environments: I agree with Sullivan that too often in the academy,

> Students are defined by their lack. . . . Whatever they write, however they write it, their writing has no intrinsic value or social import. It acquires value by being processed . . . but even then only as a vehicle of learning, not as a constitutive and consequential act of rhetoric. (45)

This dismissive response to writing by students rests not only in "what counts as knowledge" but also in "*who* counts – who gets to make knowledge, the kind of knowledge worth having" (45). Sullivan urges the readers of *College English* to "take our students' writing seriously" as a way of responding to this insight (47).

How can faculty best take students and their writing seriously? At its broadest, my SOTL work is an attempt to answer that question.

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[3] While I am unhappy with what I now read as the patronizing overtones of this observation, I restate it here in the interest of examining it more carefully in this report.

Research Question: "Who am I to tell her how she should write this essay?"
The quotation in my title comes from an Evergreen student's pre-seminar paper. It raises the question I explore in what follows: How do students explicitly represent themselves in informal inquiry-based writing, especially in relation to making knowledge?[4]

Ethos and Academic Writing: A Review[5]

In his book *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, University of New Hampshire faculty Thomas Newkirk considers issues related to autobiographical narrative in postsecondary composition courses. He draws from the work of Erving Goffman and others as he characterizes student writers' personal essays as in part a "performance of self", specifically "a self that works, that will be taken seriously" in the classroom (6). Newkirk emphasizes that the job students undertake is "not one of revelation but of construction," the construction of a performance in which the "key element" becomes "ability to maintain a situation definition [of social competence] consistent with that of the audience" (6, 7).

I'd like to move these selected ideas of Newkirk's into a related but not identical realm – that of the postsecondary student writer whose task it is to make divergent knowledge in a collaborative learning environment, through narrative that is not focused on the autobiographical. I say "related" because I suspect that for many students writing as learners in exploratory responses to assigned texts (i.e., not as autobiographers), the felt task nevertheless similarly includes representing self in a potentially judgmental world. Following Newkirk, then, I assume in what follows that these authors endeavor to present themselves through their work as successful thinker-writers with something worthwhile to communicate to others.[6] The concept of *ethos* allows me to examine their work in a way that acknowledges student agency in crafting it. By

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[4] I encountered the phrase "making knowledge" in a number of sources, several of which traced it to James A. Reither and Douglas Vipond's *College English* article "Writing as Collaboration." Reither and Vipond entitle their three "realms" of collaboration in writing "coauthoring," "workshopping" and "knowledge making" (864-865). In summarizing knowledge making, they note that "[a]ll of us who write must ground our language in the knowing of those who have preceded us. We make our meanings not alone, but in relation to others' meanings, which we come to know through reading, talk, and writing" (862). The article closes with suggestions of ways to design a course to foreground collaborative knowledge making (864-866).

[5] This is an exploratory project, the scope of which crosses a number of traditional disciplinary boundaries. As is evident from the Sources Cited list, my eventual focus was on the English studies/composition/rhetoric formulation of relevant issues, as these most closely relate to my own work here in analyzing student writing and developing faculty responses to it.

[6] Student writers presumably draw from their understandings of standards and roles prevalent in the relevant knowledge community or learned during experience in other discourse communities. And as Newkirk points out, "any form of personal expression, any social behavior, takes place in a context where often tacit rules of self-presentation are in effect" ("Dogma" 252). I will suppose that the learner/self presented in the writing I analyze is crafted to match perceived expectations with at least some degree of conscious intent. This may have been all the more the case in the writing I chose to study. Because its authors knew that it would be made public within a learning community and therefore might have interpersonal consequences, it may have seemed even more "constitutive and consequential" (Sullivan 45) to its authors, as perhaps it did to its readers. A suggestion for future research in this area: ethnographic interviews and other qualitative participation by student writers themselves, to discover how they conceptualize their task and responsibilities as knowledge makers, and also their understanding of both the process of making knowledge, and the work of knowledge made, inside and outside of a particular program.

taking seriously in this way student involvement in their work, I hope better to learn how to respond to and teach the arts of written knowledge making.

My primary focus rests on what Susan Wall terms "a textual 'self' – in rhetorical terms, an *ethos*" (290).[7] Roger Cherry traces the history of *ethos* in his 1988 study subtitled "Self-representation in Written Discourse." Although he seems to work from a conceptualization of the "stable, moral Self" abandoned by some more recent commentators (Jarratt and Reynolds 47), Cherry also attempts to theorize for use by composition teachers a difference between *ethos* and another long-used term, persona. The latter, he writes, can be thought of in reference to literary theory as "an intentional 'mask' a writer adopts in the written text" (259), and more broadly as "the roles authors create for themselves in written discourse given their representation of audience, subject matter, and other elements of context" (268-269). *Ethos*, in contrast, is "a set of characteristics that, if attributed to a writer on the basis of textual evidence, will enhance the writer's credibility" (268).

The distinction is subtle, and to further explain it Cherry poses a continuum between *ethos* and persona. Writers working at the *ethos* pole of the continuum reach for believability or credibility by representing themselves in terms of a particular "position," "knowledge" and/or "experience" intended to resonate positively with a particular audience, as when a mathematician writing a grant proposal lists her degrees and past research as qualifications (265). A more persona-oriented grant writer, on the other hand – or the same mathematician addressing a different section of the same proposal – would focus on "fulfilling or creating a certain role (or roles) in the discourse community in which [she is] operating" (265), by describing the inventive and ground-breaking aspects of the work she will do if funded.[8] According to Cherry, modern uses of persona carry the implication of "literary artifice," as when a critic assesses "'voice' or 'tone'" (269, 270).

Jarratt and Reynolds provide a reworked conception of *ethos*, drawing from what they identify as the sophist thread in traditional rhetoric and from contemporary feminist theory to discuss *ethos* as "a way of claiming and taking responsibility for our positions in the world" (52). Rather than something an author turns outward – a "set of instructions [. . .] about how to create the most convincing impression of himself [sic] before an audience" (39) – *ethos* becomes an acknowledgement through which rhetors "identify themselves and those to whom they write and speak within networks of gender, class, and power [. . .] in fashioning discourses that build on specific points of commonality with audiences" (57). Writing alone in a second article, Reynolds locates these common points not within a rhetor but "between," quoting Karen Burke LeFevre as siting them at "the point of intersection between speaker or writer and listener or reader (qtd. in Reynolds 333).

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[7] Aristotle identified three types of proof to be used in persuasion, which Julie Nelson Christoph characterizes as "*logos* (appeal to reason), *pathos* (appeal to emotion about the topic of discussion), and *ethos* (appeal to the audience's trust in the speaker's character)" (Christoph 662). As Johanna Schmertz has noted, consideration of *ethos* quickly raises "questions of authority and agency" (82) – and, I would add, the speaker or writer's voice. Though these additional concepts have literatures of their own in composition theory and elsewhere, I have restricted my reading for this investigation to literature on the personal, and on *ethos*, in academic writing.

[8] This scenario is adapted from Cherry's discussion of G. Myers' "The Social Construction of Two Biologists' Proposals" published in *Written Communication* 2, 219-245 (Cherry 266-267).

Although it does not refer to *ethos* or to "self presentation," the similar if more organic concept of author "presence" centers the Evergreen Thinking Rubric designed by former Evergreen director of research David B. Marshall. The rubric, intended to serve both as an informative framework or model and as a tool for assessment of the thought represented in student products ranging from poetry and painting to essays and critiques, is shaped as a Swiss cross (1). Domains of "view," "appreciation," "communication," and "method" form each arm of the cross, with "presence" occupying the middle space (where all five domains meet). Marshall describes presence as including reflexivity ("the author thinking about his/her own thinking as it unfolds"), awareness (a sense of "spaciousness" communicating that the author is working consciously and creatively rather than being constrained by a specific method), and authenticity ("the author stands forth as a strong, vivid, and unmistakable presence") (7). Overall, Marshall's work in the rubric relies on an expansive approach to thinking, one that "adds feeling, perception and intuition to conceptual cognition" (2).

Few authors whose work I read addressed practical ways researchers might identify and analyze instances of self presentation -- the writer's *ethos* or persona -- in academic writing (including inquiry-based writing). Marshall suggests that "readiness" (his highest assessment category) in terms of author presence in a student work might be characterized by "receptivity" toward multiple perspectives (5), a "relaxed approach" in working with ideas (the sense, in other words, that the author is working consciously and creatively rather than following a specific method) (5), and the writer's "strong, vivid, and unmistakable presence" (7) in the work. In her article "Argument and Evidence in the Case of the Personal," Candace Spigelman suggests principles for evaluating what she terms "personal narrative" used in academic argument – writing in which authors "make sense of their lives by organizing their experience into first-person stories" (65-66). In concordance with Newkirk, Spigelman points out that although personal writings can be read as straightforward "acts of self-revelation," theorists "recognize these acts as hermeneutic figurings organized to tell a story of coherent experience [. . .] and organized by means of a narrative persona, a representation" (64).

Susan V. Wall assesses *ethos*, her "textual 'self'" (290), in an *English Education* article examining three formal papers authored by graduate student teacher researchers. Her work suggests several directions for rhetorical assessment of academic texts in relation to both *ethos* and persona. Wall's observation that "genre conventions for representing both self and knowledge making" (289) shaped the students' work in various ways raises, with Cherry, questions about writers' conceptualizations of their task, and also of the resources available to them as they complete it (Wall 289-290) – resources of ideas, history, models, colleagues and so on. Wall also highlights three approaches used by the writers and related to their presentations of self as knowledge makers: one author's technique of implanting short narratives of her process and growth during the project within the longer research report (292-297); another's reliance on metaphor as a "creative method" for "critical, revisionist thinking" (298; 297-304); and the third's move in her work into a wider interpretive community beyond her own classroom (304-312). I will return to the first of these below, in analyzing my own students' papers.

Christoph's study of published narratives by U.S. pioneer women comes the closest of any I found to methodical analysis of self presentation, across several written texts. She addresses in a 2002 article in *College English* the insight that traditional academic education coaches scholars

to "see *logos* [reason] as the true measure of an argument," leading to her suggestion that "the most effective way to theorize uses of the personal is to isolate *ethos* by examining texts that depend primarily on *ethos* rather than *logos* for their persuasive force" (668). Christoph identifies three rhetorical gestures she dubs "strategies of placement" in the autobiographies, a phrase she finds "well suited to describing the contingent nature of subjectivity" and its relationship to "material constraints of a writer's physical space and geography, as well as to placement within ideological debates" (669).

Christoph's autobiographers presented self most obviously in a placement strategy she termed "identity statements" tied to "a particular place or community, saying in effect, 'I am a ____.'" (670). In a second placement device, dubbed "moral display," these authors "attempt to connect with the moral standards of the community and to establish trust through demonstrating similar values" (671). Finally, Christoph found a number of what she calls "material associations" in these texts, references to specific belongings (671), for example, or to the use of particular "linguistic tools" (672) that establish them in the eyes of a specific audience as "women with particular kinds of tastes and cultural sensibilities" (671).

Until recently, writing to "prove" a thesis with the intent of "win[ning] undisputed acceptance for it" frequently dominated composition classrooms (Zeiger, "Exploratory" 456) – a formal approach so highly structured that writers may in effect adopt it as a persona in itself, a mask or role communicating scholarly expertise. Not all college writing is intended to persuade formally, however, as William Zeiger points out. Writing to "discover the fecundity of an idea" ("Exploratory" 456) and "the slow melding of old and new ideas" (457) or teaching students to "manipulate and examine an idea, to invent arguments, to hit upon effective illustrations" (455), is just as vital to education as writing to "confine the reader to a single, unambiguous line of thought" (462) or teaching to "construct a logical argument" (458). Zeiger contrasts the rational "formal essay" grounded in *logos* and built around an inflexible structure of "thesis-proof" ("Personal" 237, 235) with a narrative "informal essay," employing "a variety of nonlogical forms of suasion" ("Personal" 236) more oriented toward *ethos* and *pathos* ("Personal" 237). I mention this here to make the point that personal credibility and acknowledgement of identity – *ethos* – are key to informal writing as Zeiger describes it, a thought we will revisit below.[9]

Before continuing, I'd like to emphasize the distinction I'm making between *ethos* and "personal writing." The first as used in this paper denotes authors' explicit presentation of self in any category of writing, with or without use of the first person. The other is identified in various ways within composition and rhetoric as a type of content different from other content; definitions range from Spigelman's above ("first person stories") (66) and "combining autobiographical and theoretical content into a new genre" (Christoph 660), to "prose that gives significant attention to the writer's experiences and feelings" (Gere 204) and text that reveals its

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[9] Individual characteristics of convergence and divergence of thought may suggest one means of distinction between formal and informal academic writing. Marshall speculates in the Evergreen Thinking Rubric that successful convergent thinking (which I am relating to formal academic writing) focuses on the *view* domain composed in part by "evidence," "implications," "position" and "insight"; and on the *method* domain made up of "language," "effectiveness" and "genre." Divergent thought (informal academic writing), on the other hand, contains qualities of both *appreciation,* which Marshall further characterizes as encompassing elements of "other views" and "inclusiveness" (among others); and *communication,* characterized by "emotion, tone, engagement, beauty, play, [and] empathic connection" (2).

author's "quotidian circumstances" (qtd. in Hindman 10).[10] My concern is to make the point, with Susan Wall, that "a credible *ethos* is always important in scholarship" (293) – and (I add) in both formal and informal writing produced in relation to scholarly thought. Although they may certainly include personal detail, *ethos* statements and strategies do not depend necessarily on confidential revelations or even on obvious references to life outside of the task at hand. And yet they may still be *personal*, if not, perhaps, "personal writing," carrying within traces of the idiosyncratic writer in the form of opinions, values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, not-intimate references to individual experiences and so on. Boundaries blur here, and I agree with Christoph when she notes that composition theorists "have missed many of the potential ways and settings in which writers invoke the personal [. . .] we need to expand our ways of thinking about the personal to better write and read work that is not explicitly autobiographical" (660-661).[11]

Methods

Data for this study comes from writing assigned in the regular course of an interdisciplinary Evergreen program; I rely on the information student writers provided in these pre-seminar papers and written peer responses to observe their portrayals of themselves and their work as thinker-writers. I also proceed here on the assumptions that the writer's presence, albeit shaped by a number of factors external to the author including those ideological and political, is present and discernable at least to some extent in academic writing that is *not* primarily "personal" (or personal at all, in the stricter autobiographical sense) – and that within this work, writers can and do at least partially intend representation of a particular authorial or scholarly self. How, then, to discover it?

To begin my analysis, I selected two pieces of writing (12 total) from six student authors; one reading or "pre-seminar" paper and one peer response each. All of these writings came from the second assignment of the quarter, in a half-time program combining art and women's studies that

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[10] Douglas Hesse points out that "personal writing" as a concept is confusing because we often conflate three ideas within it: "the 'topic' of the writing, the 'audience' of the writing, and the 'genres' of the writing" ("Portfolios" 5).

[11] We must also acknowledge the fact that society and culture create varying and often unequal access to valued forms of *ethos* in public self-presentations. The discursive nature of classroom interaction, for example, renders it the product of "co-construction" between faculty and students, "emerging from within the gender, social class, and ethnicity of students and teachers" (DeBlase 367). (And, I add, from within many additional factors including age and dis/ability.) A number of authors have addressed this from a variety of angles, including that of self-representation in assigned writing. Nikitina chronicles students' refusal to speak from the personal in a history of science course designed to welcome it; Williams writes of the experience of teaching at an international college where students from several countries and cultures evidenced a significant range of epistemological assumptions and degrees of comfort related to writing autobiography. The "politics of public disclosure" (McLeod 389) are the subject of McLeod's and Royster's essays on the effects of race on what Royster terms "cross-boundary discourse" (29). Min-Zhan Lu asks students and faculty to "rethink ways of using personal experience so that readings through the personal will not be at the expense of other stories and selves" ("Reading" 242) and to use "writing, especially personal narratives, as a site for reflecting on and revising one's sense of self, one's relations with others, and the conditions of one's life" ("Redefining" 173). Nancy Potter raises the issue of the ways in which personal experience – here, that of incest – is ignored or actively denied in "epistemic communities," thereby affecting the survivor's opportunity to engage in "knowledge-production" (76). Although I can't do more here to expand on these concerns, or to explore the connections between them and students' presentations of themselves in their assigned writing, Reynolds, and Jarratt and Reynolds, have laid some groundwork for exploring these issues in relation to *ethos*, and I strongly confirm that these are vital areas for future research.

I taught with Ann Storey. Storey and I deliberately characterized both types of weekly writing in printed instructions to students as "'writing to learn' – that is, writing that allows you to explore aspects of the reading that interest you" and also writing that is "more than summaries of the readings" (Sandoz "Weekly"). In other words, our goal was divergent, rather than convergent, knowledge making – more kin to Zeiger's informal essay than to formal expository writing ("Exploratory" 456). Writers were instructed in our syllabus to "engage deeply with ideas" (Storey).

The informal measure of the inquiry-based writing in the program was "what you – and the rest of us – learn from it." Writers were expected to end each paper with three to five generative questions designed to stimulate further conversation. (Complete instructions for the papers and responses can be found in Appendix A. My workshop on formulating generative questions is available in the report of a previous SOTL project; Sandoz *Project* Appendix 4 15-18.)

I chose the students whose work I examined in two ways: of the men in the program, three signed letters granting me permission to use their work in research. I matched these three with the names of three women, drawn out of a hat filled with the names of the female program members who signed permission letters. In the pre-seminar paper for this week, students wrote about their choices from a pool of eight readings. Each student writer posted a paper, and then selected a paper from her or his on-line reading circle (seven to nine students) to respond to. I wanted to work with writing from early in the quarter because over time reading circles develop different "cultures," and I hoped that my findings would be more widely useful if I looked at work completed before these cultures had much opportunity to form.

The writings on which I focus my analysis below are not (and weren't expected to be) finished pieces. Four of the papers centered on identified themes carried throughout, while two consisted of a series of independent paragraphs containing insights and comment related to specific readings. None of the writers overtly attempted what I would call a formal persuasive essay, although all moved beyond recounting texts to include some analysis, synthesis and/or theorizing in their work. Their papers and peer responses explored ideas, in other words, rather than proved them. The general tenor of the papers and peer responses was one of engagement – personal engagement, in fact, in which authors were overtly present as thinkers.

Students did not know at the time they wrote that their work might be included in a faculty research project; those whose writing I drew from here signed release forms during the final week of class, giving me permission to use their work if presented anonymously.

My several approaches to analyzing the papers will be discussed below, with their results. But first, I want to contextualize these findings with a brief comment on the students' construction of "knowledge" as such. These writers' unsolicited endorsement of knowledge as active and influential was obvious from the first sentence I read. Individual writers documented their observations that in our texts for the week, words "heal," art and writing "revolt against the oppressive forces [their creators] have faced," writing "becomes a fight to expose the hate and fear of ignorance," and "refusal to speak the truth" damages or ends relationships. Such dynamism generalizes off the page; "revolution [. . .] is occurring any time a woman looks at a

media image and sees how fake it is, any time a woman picks up a pen to tell her story."[12] The articles students read also influenced them personally: a particular essay was "incredibly [. . .] thought provoking" for one student, and others found one or another of our texts "inspiring," "powerful," "disturbing," "striking" in the sense of giving one pause, and even "interesting." One student found it sad that a white character in one of the short stories could protest others' rejections of her African American friend without seeing that she herself was also rejecting that friend; another student structured a paper on the same story around an insight that "failed relationships are caused by a refusal to speak the truth and openly communicate with each other." Both writers noticed and remarked that problems can follow on absence or withholding of knowledge. Five of the writers in the study included at least one observation about the power of knowledge in their writing for the week studied.

Results

The working question for this study was: How do students explicitly represent themselves in informal inquiry-based writing, especially in relation to making knowledge? I explored answers to this question from three perspectives: counts of first person pronouns and observations on their use, identification and analysis of short learning narratives, and examination of the explicit "moves" or "tactics" one author used in crafting self-presentation.

<u>Writers Actively Present in Their Work</u>
In general, the students made themselves unequivocally present in these writings. Four of the six authors used singular first person pronouns frequently in their papers and all did so in responses, explicitly announcing activity as knowledge-makers. The words "I," "me" and "my" appeared in various combinations an average of 14.7 times in each one- to three-page paper (range 1 to 22), and an average of 12.3 times in each roughly three-quarter page response (range 6 to 17). [13] As shown in the table below, authors also represented themselves as present to their work in more than one way, using pronouns to claim both thinking and feeling. The activities of *thinking/assessing* (identified by counting words implying thinking/assessing activity, that were marked in the papers by "I", "me" and "my") appeared in the writing roughly twice as often as representations of the author *feeling* (identified by counting words implying feeling, that were marked in the papers by "I", "me" and "my"). [14] Numbers gleaned from peer responses are

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[12] Our readings for the week, selected around the theme of "telling women's stories," did lend themselves to constructing knowledge as powerful. But the fact that five of six students identified this as a theme, and wrote about it in one way or another, was striking especially when coupled with the enthusiasm of their endorsement.

[13] I'd like to emphasize here that the nature of our readings for the week – three personal essays and a poem and one short story told from the first person, accompanied by another short story and two expository excerpts from a book discussing the work of female artists – may have encouraged students writing about them to draw on their personal reactions to the texts. In addition, the example pre-seminar paper provided by program faculty modeled use of the first person. I separated papers from peer responses, which in my experience are invariably written in the first person, in this analysis for a more sensitive look at reliance on the first person in student papers specifically.

[14] Although made uneasy by distinguishing feeling from thinking in knowledge making, I found it useful to examine how students characterized personal presence in their knowledge making process. They did not link it with feeling as often as many critics of "the personal" in academic writing might seem to suggest. While tempted to discuss linkages between *ethos* and *pathos* in this paper, I'm not adequately prepared to do so.

similar to those from papers, despite the fact that responses were significantly shorter, averaging perhaps half the length or less of papers.

Despite program emphasis on the collaborative nature of knowledge making and our corporate structure as a learning community, knowledge-making generally appeared in these writings as something undertaken by an individual working alone in response to material in a reading or another program member's paper. The words "we", "us" and "our" refer to the activity of knowledge making just eight times in these writings, relied on in this sense by three authors.[15] Use of the first person helped writers construct portrayals of themselves as engaged, if not overtly collaborative, learner-knowers.

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[15] First person plural pronouns appeared 31 times overall, a sharp contrast to 162 uses of the first person singular. Oddly, writers referred to the collective "we" (an entity bigger than the "you" and "I" frequently relied on to indicate exchange between a paper writer and a peer reviewer) more rarely in peer responses than in papers – seven times in two responses, six of which turned up in the same paper. Only one of the six students explicitly positioned knowledge making itself as a collective enterprise, by asking the question "Does anyone have any suggestions?"

Occurrences of First Person Pronouns (Singular) in
Selected Pre-Seminar Papers and Responses

Category	Sample Actions Associated with First Person Pronouns	Occurrences in Six Papers[16]	Occurrences in Six Peer Responses[17]
Thinking/Assessing Words Marked by Pronoun*	Think, connect, associate, assert, occurred, saw, drew, ask, agree	26	35
	Get the sense or impression, tend, seemed, to me (when said of perception, as "To me that was the inspiration . . .")	12 **Papers:** **38 total** *Thinking/Assessing*	3 **Responses:** **38 total** *Thinking/Assessing*
Feelings Words Marked by Pronoun*	Felt, inspired, enjoyed, loved, shocked, liked, hated	18 **Papers:** **18 total** *Feeling*	18 **Responses:** **18 total** *Feeling*
Bridge Words Marked by Pronoun* (Words implying engagement of feelings *and* intellect)	Interested, intrigued, struck	3	3
	Believe	2	5
	Found	2 **Papers:** **7 total** *Bridge*	1 **Responses:** **9 total** *Bridge*
First Person Pronouns Not Directly Related to Making Knowledge as Process	Verb denoting an action ("I took this program."); use pertaining to identity, identification or relation ("my parents"); other	25 **Papers:** **25 total** *Unrelated*	9 **Responses:** **9 total** *Unrelated*
Total First Person Pronouns (Singular)		88	74
Average Number of Occurrences Per Piece		14.7	12.3
Range of Frequency of Occurrence in Individual Writings		1 to 22	6 to 17

* I did not count instances of this type of work when unaccompanied by singular first person pronouns. For example, characterizations such as "'X' was an interesting poem" are not included here.

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[16] The average length of the papers was 810 words (449 to 1,153).
[17] The average length of the responses was 334 words (140 to 458).

Learning "Scenes" or "Vignettes": *Personas* of Movement and Engagement

Although I expected to find them in this informal writing, stories of personal experiences other than the experiences of learning and knowing were not a part of the writing I examined, in Robert Scholes' sense of story as "beginning-middle-end" or "situation-transformation-situation" narrative (210). The stories five of these writers *did* tell were about themselves as knowledge makers. Part of writers' self-presentation as learner-thinkers is noted in the table above. The learning narratives I address here were appreciably different from the "I think . . ." formulation in structure and length, though, and also in the rhetorical work they accomplished. In identifying what I will call interchangeably learning "scenes" and "vignettes," I relied first on Scholes' definition of narration (of which story is one type) as "the symbolic presentation of a sequence of events connected by subject matter and related by time" (209). I soon found, however, that movement alone (without assessing for indicators of time) was a better marker of these accounts. Movement also seemed to me to be a trustworthy tool for analysis, as I wanted to avoid attempting to guess at the writers' motivations for including the scenes, in order to focus on the work of these passages within the specific discourse situation.

All together, thirteen scenes of learning appeared in five students' writings, five in papers and eight in responses.[18] (The range per student, across both types of writing, was 1 to 6.) In reading the vignettes as a group I observed these similarities:

- Each account employs the first person and describes a minimum of two "steps" or "movements" in a specific learning experience for the writer (my definition of "learning vignette").
- Each responds directly and specifically to one of our readings or to another program member's paper, documenting a back-and-forth learning encounter.
- In seven of the learning vignettes, student authors directly associate emotions with learning.
- Six accounts document a specific transformation[19] or change in the writer while seven do not.
- Twelve scenes hinge on the writer's actual learning while the thirteenth addresses not knowing how to respond to a particular reading.

In keeping with their conceptualizations of knowledge as dynamic, students presented themselves as journeying through linked actions or movements (physical or mental) during the process of thinking and learning. In other words, these are accounts of knowledge-making. The shortest was, "I started to respond to your paper and realized that . . .".[20]

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[18] I have made a distinction here between "knowledge making as drama" on the order of "Sorry this is kinda hastily written. I got in late." and "anecdotes of knowledge making" which speak more directly to learning. My focus is on the latter.

[19] Susan Wall's work on *ethos* in student writing, discussed at more length below, alerted me to the possibility that what I'm calling "learning scenes" might address learner transformation. The definition of transformation as "change in the writer" is my own.

[20] A quick survey of the writers' actions depicted in the vignettes yielded the following, which I have not edited for repetition: respond, made associations, felt shocked, read, questioned, enjoyed, brought up, read, thought, read, felt, pointed out, found, brought up, understood, felt, thought, concluded, responded, realized, hashed out, read,

Here's a typical non-transformative (i.e., movement-only) account:

> . . .the conclusions I have come to so far say that in order for us to find our true identity, open communication is vital. . . . So my question is, with this knowledge, what can we do to communicate better?

This writer's movement is from conclusions (previously formed; the first move) to asking a question (the second move) – a knowledge-making move, but not one documenting a change in understanding or new thinking in response to something read in this program.

The following learning scene represents the transformative effect a reading had on one student's own work and thinking:

> Ever since I was young I have always associated being a feminist and being pro-choice. That's why I was so shocked when at the beginning of this article she stated: "[. . .]." Yet, as [I] continued to read I began not to question [the essayist's] views, but I began to question my own views. As a woman can you really claim to be revolting against an oppressive patriarchal system when you support pro-choice, if that choice you are supporting is still oppressive to women?

In the journey from equating "feminist" with "pro-choice," through shock, more reading, and self-questioning, the student-writer begins to alter long-held opinions.

I'd like to examine two atypical vignettes at more length, before discussing what these accounts as a group may tell us about writer self-presentation. While responding to another student's paper, one writer noted:

> I couldn't agree more on your response. [The] essay on abortion bordered between shocking and offensive. I'm convinced that her insensitivity to abortion is the cause of some deep-rooted emotions in me. Yet, I don't know how she should address the issue. More compassion? Who am I to say how she should write this essay? If she was able to get this level of response from her readers, I think she accomplished her goal.

My reading of the "plot" of this excerpt is this:

> I agree with you . . . essay shocked and offended . . . her handling of abortion resulted in [meaningful] emotions for this reader . . . but I don't have knowledge of a "should" [an ethical principle] to apply here . . . I don't have standing to state what the writer should do . . . if we feel this deeply, then she did what she wanted [presumably, emotionally affected her readers]

Though in agreement with another learning community member and emotionally affected by the reading, the student says s/he doesn't know a proper way to respond – at least not in the present knowledge-making setting. S/he is not sure how the essay author should have approached this material, and does not claim to have authority to critique the essay directly, settling finally for an assumption that the author wanted to stir up deep emotions, which the student tells us did occur. There is evidence of knowledge-making action in the succession – reading the text and feeling

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questioned, pondered, concluded, disagreed, felt intrigued, looked up, checked it out, concluded, questioned, made assessments, thought, felt, got an impression, made a connection, agreed, felt, concluded, questioned.

affected by it – and also the sense of feeling thwarted and perhaps manipulated by the author's work in the published essay.

In the "no learning" portion of second atypical vignette, a different student author stated that s/he had in the past "hashed out" personal feelings and opinions related to a similar reading, and didn't need to do so again. Again, this scene captures some movement, but here the location of actual learning – off in an unspecified past – distances it.

Given the learning-based content and "present" quality of the rest of the learning vignettes, I took these two accounts describing interruption in our very immediate knowledge making activity as a warning to think carefully. What work do the scenes in general undertake, in inquiry-based papers intended for reading by others within a learning community setting?

Susan Wall's focus on what she calls the "Researcher's Tale" in teachers' narratives suggests an initial answer, one grounded in role requirements. Wall focuses on professional expectations in discussing explicit self-presentation inserted into papers written by student researchers, in an article I read after identifying the scenes set into my own students' work. Her "Researcher's Tale" is an additional thread or "story" writers tell of their "experience of learning to be a researcher," crafted from field notes, journal entries, anecdotes and the like, and interwoven into more formally academic content addressing the research itself (294). Wall sees the Researcher's Tale as one of "an emerging set of genre conventions for representing both self and knowledge making in the [teacher] research narrative" (289), a genre that asks and allows authors to "produce" an authorizing narrative "that can enable them to write authoritatively, theoretically, and critically about their research" (290). Wall's students reach toward matching the specifications of a desired professional role, in other words, by including Researcher's Tale material in their papers.

Following on Wall, it is possible to read Evergreen students' learning vignettes as (self-) credentialing the writer to perform in a specific situation. Whatever their individual understandings are of the "genre" these papers fall into, or of the functions expected of them as learning community members and students, all students' writings will soon be studied by an audience expecting to participate in joint construction of knowledge, and eventually by a faculty evaluating their work for "substantive" engagement with ideas. Representation of willingness to think seriously about – even, perhaps, to be transformed by – texts and ideas can position the writer as a willing, competent and engaged group member qualified for his or her part in collaborative knowledge making.[21] In addition, the inquiry-based nature of our program's writing assignment invited students to work from a position of openness and exploration, rather than authoritative exposition. The scenes embedded in their work reveal them to be doing precisely that, thus emphasizing the competence of their approach.[22]

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[21] Even the "thwarted learning" scene recounted above communicates persuasion related to engagement in its portrayal of agreeing, reading, feeling, publicly stating lack of knowledge, and attributing motive to the author of the reading, despite the writer's perceived lack of standing to respond directly. As Wall implies in the context of dissent within a professional field, the *ethos* of critic, when communicated publicly, can be a position from which to contribute to scholarly work of "questioning and reevaluation" (312).

[22] Kate Ronald notes that classical rhetoric was meant to teach the rhetor as much as the listeners, that it contained a personal component, and that what matters in that tradition for the teaching of writing now is "the *process*, the way

Wall's explanation of the Researcher's Tale recalls Cherry's account of the "persona" aspect of credibility, as self-presentation shaped for "fulfilling or creating a certain role (or roles) in the discourse community in which [a writer is] operating" (Cherry 265). In Wall's study, the role was that of the teacher-researcher writing within a professional genre. In mine, student-writers undertook to complete an assignment, while simultaneously performing as active members of a learning community shaped by classroom and institutional cultures and by faculty and peer expectations.[23]

Learning Vignettes and *Ethos*

At the other end of the self-presentation continuum from persona, *ethos* – in Cherry's words, "a set of characteristics that, if attributed to a writer on the basis of textual evidence, will enhance the writer's credibility" (268) – is also at work in these explicit accounts of learning. My second read of the vignettes depends first on the work of literary nonfiction theorist Douglas Hesse, who discusses a type of narrative essay that "persuades not by offering propositions and formal proof but by moving us through narrative from one scene to another" ("Stories" 188). Although few of the student writings considered here contain multiple learning scenes, and none of their authors link scenes in the sense of providing a connected personal story of learning, the movement in the learning vignettes themselves can function as a form of modeling the act of a dialogical (i.e., not coercive) form of persuasion, an attempt at "convincing [readers] alternatively to accept and abandon states of affairs" as the writer herself moves from one position to the next ("Stories" 189). The resulting impression is of writers experienced in the act of learning, and also of writer fair-mindedness – a willingness on the part of the writer her- or himself to be convinced, while also taking the risks s/he is asking the reader to take in moving from insight to insight.[24] Readers of the vignettes can observe and assess the writer's knowledge-making practice in action from a very different angle than they can in a more formal piece of writing. The vignettes worked persuasively within the papers and responses, in other words, to document their authors' trustworthiness as active practitioners of divergent and dialogical (not rigid or close-ended) thinking.

The learning scenes add to the writers' believability in another way, as well. While discussing the distinction between the informal and formal essay, Zeiger references Walter Fisher to suggest that formal essays require expertise most people do not possess. It is the stories – defined here as "any 'recounting' or 'accounting for' human experience" – in more informal approaches that allow even non-experts to put forward and assess ideas ("Personal" 237; Fisher qtd. in Zeiger "Personal" 237). While I would hesitate to label the students in this study as "non-experts," the

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subjects are handled and the part audiences are called upon to play, all in relation to the student learning this process" (emphasis in original) (38).

[23] While some of these expectations are stated in the program syllabus and covenant, and in Evergreen's Social Contract and Student Conduct Code, ethnographic research would provide better information about student understandings of the discourse community, and about the ways in which students consciously draw on these while composing papers and peer responses.

[24] Ronald draws from work by Douglas Ehninger and Don Burks to make the point that to avoid coercion, persuaders must be willing to be persuaded, noting that "a rhetor may depart from the rhetorical situation a different *self* or *person*" (her emphasis) (41).

learning scenes they crafted (whatever their authors' individual levels of formal academic expertise) certainly do chart new insights and raise new questions. In this informal writing, proof of knowledge making comes, not through reason (*logos*) and the "thesis-proof" formal persuasive essay form, but through a report of the writer's intellectual and perhaps emotional activity (a form of *ethos* at times accompanied by *pathos*, as when the author of the first atypical vignette above confessed confusion).[25]

Ethos and Strategies of Placement

Julie Christoph's "strategies of placement", *ethos*-based author "moves" or "tactics" Christoph identified in pioneer women's published autobiographies, provide a third window (after pronouns and learning scenes) through which to look at self-presentation in student writing.[26] While Christoph distinguished three strategies, as described above, I focus here on two: identity statements and material associations.[27]

Students in this study made identity statements as Christoph defines them, "in which a writer explicitly refers to some facet of her self-identity" (670), but these references with one exception were quite brief. Three writers plainly asserted critical subject positions in relation to our work, one as "being [a] male," another as "being female" (a female who had read "a fair amount" about abortion and had long "associated being a feminist and being pro-choice"), and the third as "a white feminist-oriented straight woman" who also referred to "my own art work." A writer noted that as a child, s/he lived in two countries (both of which were identified), a circumstance allowing her/him to have two sets of friends. In each case, the claim to a particular identity served within the paper as grounds or validation for one or more of the writers' observations or

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[25] Wall also notes the importance of "persuasive self presentation" in student writing (293); a teacher research narrative written in the first person "can be read as [effective] research only if it persuades readers that its author has changed how she understands herself and her world – for how else do we define 'learning'?" (297). On another tack, Newkirk writes in *The Performance of Self in Student Writing* of the widely-held convention, apparent among his own students, that personal narrative should demonstrate a "turn" of growth or change (Chapter 2). My intuition is that the structure and content of the learning vignettes also may be related to this trope.

[26] Alert readers will have noticed that the strategy of movement – in this case, from theorist to theorist and analysis to analysis – can be seductive.

[27] I found that in the students' writings – which while they certainly contain self-representation, do not fall within the genres of formal argument or the types of text Christoph worked with in developing her schema, published autobiography – I could not unequivocally distinguish more than two very brief *explicit* examples of moral display. Christoph suggests pronouncements on another's moral principles, criticism of procedural choices and academic discussion of identity politics in novels and other literary writings, as three examples of moral display in academic work (678). Perhaps because of the exploratory and generally loosely-structured nature of the writings in this study, their authors rarely passed unequivocal judgment. One writer stated clearly a position defining abortion as "based on moral issues." S/he also used evaluative language to praise peers' work (as did every other student writer) and to identify specific positions as "correct" and "offensive." Other writers assessed beyond "agree" or "disagree" simply by describing the impact of something on themselves, terming it for example "interesting." I will speculate that there may be a social "genre" at work here, part of the collaborative Evergreen culture. I emphasize the fact that I looked only for *explicit* moral displays, in keeping with my larger project here; all texts, of course, are deeply entangled in assumptions and values expressed in a number of ways – some or many of which are not consciously chosen by the writer. I also may be failing to see moral displays in student writing; in any case, the topic of moral "markers" in student writing as an aspect of self-presentation deserves more attention than I was able to give it in the context of the present project.

propositions; the artist backed her statement that some of the readings for the week made a strong impact on her, for example, by noting that they addressed her own goal in making art.

These identity statements have at least the potential to work in a way more obviously related to the interpersonal than to academic self-presentation, within the broader context of a learning community, and that may be one reason that students make them.[28] The following example reveals a student's choice to identify himself as male, with "male perspective," for rhetorical purposes of backing his claim that he has something to learn that this program can teach.

> There is one part [of a reading] that got me thinking, [. . .] [the author writes about how a particular artist] "draws on her own experiences as a wife and mother." This is it! This is why I'm taking this art class [. . .] For a different view on art, and everything. All my life I pretty much just saw art from a male perspective, by being male, and also by being taught male art from male teachers. [. . .] For crying out loud I'm sick of it, I'm sick of dudes! Wow I never really thought of it that way until I read that paragraph. That notion has always been in my head I never really had words to describe it.

Within a women's studies program at a college with a reputation for radical politics, a male program participant might anticipate the possibility that others will see maleness as problematic. We observe this particular male in the act of re-constructing his own subject position within the program environment in his second paper of the quarter, textually embracing the opportunity (provided by program readings and content) to gain "a different view on art, and everything." He writes a self-portrait of enthusiasm as he locates himself on the feminist side – "our" side – of a presumed non-feminist/feminist (or male/female) divide. Whether consciously intended to do so or not, this identity statement certainly functions as a strategic *ethos* decision within the social context of a women's studies learning community roughly 90% female and convened by two female faculty, and reminds us of the possible felt effects of a collaborative learning environment on student self-representation in writing made public within it. That it also can be read as a story about transformative learning and as well as positioning in an identity other than the stereotypical male adds to its potential impact on readers.

Material associations, like identity statements, operate in the "between" where writer and listener meet;[29] they are "references [. . .] to specific elements of [writers'] material and social conditions" that Christoph sees as "particularly significant to how [these authors] convey *ethos*" (671). Material associations for Christoph's pioneer autobiographers rest in mentions they made of physical belongings, and also in what Christoph calls "linguistic tools, such as uses of maxims, intertextual references, and regional language" (672), used by the authors to portray themselves as people possessed of certain "cultural sensibilities" (671). Christoph finds an analogous method of self-representation among academics in our choices of analytical paraphernalia – our "terms and theories" – and in the sources we cite (678). I want to avoid meta-analysis here, given the "localized" (674) and "unstable and changing" (672) nature of material associations and the occasional difficulty of identifying "traceable cultural affiliations"

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[28] Students in this program also had face-to-face opportunities during class sessions to share personal information, perhaps reducing felt need for written identity positioning.

[29] The contextualized *ethos* is a "social act," one that is "a complex set of characteristics constructed by a group, sanctioned by that group, and more readily recognizable to others who belong or who share similar values or experiences" (Reynolds 327). As noted above, Reynolds joins Ronald and Karen Burke LeFevre in siting *ethos* "between," stating that the latter considers *ethos* to be a "negotiation that takes place in written discourse" (333).

(673) for them. Instead, I will focus on an excerpt from one student author's work to examine how s/he drew on material associations in *ethos* construction.[30]

First, a disclaimer. In analyzing two long paragraphs of this student's paper for material associations, I am necessarily reading it from my own location as a teacher of 15 years experience, an Evergreen faculty, and the faculty of the particular program – the discursive community – that served as part of the setting for this particular writing. And, of course, I know the student in ways that augment my reading of his/her paper. The presentation of self this author crafted in this single piece of writing could very easily be interpreted one way by me and differently by a different reader (even another member of the same program). I will try, therefore, to focus here on identifying markers of the presence of *ethos* and how they convey information to a reader, rather than on what the *ethos* message might be. In order to reduce awkward pronoun constructions, I will refer to this author as "she" and "Mary," although I do not mean thereby to make known her/his actual name or gender self-identity. In crafting this textual reading of a constructed text, I am hoping further to explore students' work in representing "self" in their writing.

On first examination, Mary's paper is similar to the others I studied in terms of the sources it draws from – the assigned reading for the week, the reader-writer's professed experience of the text, personal experience, and what I will call "common experience" (soon to be explained). References to sources are two of Cristoph's linguistic material associations – "uses of maxims" and "intertextual references" (672),[31] so these are of particular interest. Mary also refers to and quotes from the text she chose with mostly correct citation format, which as a faculty I see as solidly respectable knowledge making strategy in any academic paper, no matter how informal.[32]

Below are the paragraphs from Mary's paper. Although this excerpt is not a learning vignette, I will employ movement once again as a tool of analysis.

> In Tillie Olsen's "O Yes," Helen (Carol's mother) is thinking of ways to best explain the differences between Carol and her friend Parry, and instead of speaking what's on her mind she "discards" these explanatory truths (Olsen 60). This was very powerful for me as instead of complete honesty, which might sting a little bit, there is this iced layer of ignorance spread over the whole situation. The impression I get is that the truth hurts, and so let's just forget about it. I say this because I had a similar situation in my

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[30] In choosing a paper rather than a peer response for this discussion I do not want to ignore the possibility that strategies of placement might prove useful as an entry into understanding the latter. It may be, for example, that the seemingly obligatory compliments to paper authors that opened virtually all of the peer responses I studied in another SOTL project are in fact moral displays – a fulfillment, in Kathleen Geissler's words, of "one's social obligation to be polite" (268). Such fulfillment may represent a writer as one who negotiates a particular moral path; here, the path of responsible relationship in learning community. For more on students' explicit work with the social in peer responses, see Sandoz *Project Report*, especially pages 6-7 and Appendix 2.

[31] The other is "regional language," which Christoph suggests might be recognized by faculty as slang (678); we might broaden the category here to include technical terminology easily recognized as other than what has been developed in this specific program. In this paper, I notice only that Mary uses a technical term from elsewhere – "installation" – in passing reference to an artist's work.

[32] The popular "OWL at Purdue" website on source citation carries this sentence in its MLA section: "Writers who properly use MLA also build their credibility by demonstrating accountability to their source material" (Neyhart and Karper, rev. by Stolley). Source citation, in other words, carries *ethos*-related messages.

childhood. Instead of it ever being clearly addressed, it was tiptoed around and baffled over for many years. In "I Stand Here Ironing" a mother is regretting basically a failed relationship, and I can't help but make the connection that these failed relationships are caused by a refusal to speak the truth and openly communicate with each other.

"Having surrounded herself with the furnishings of that world of childhood she no sooner learned to live in comfortably, then had to leave" (Olsen ["O Yes"] 59). We treat children like children—giving them a fairytale understanding of the world—until all of the sudden they are supposed to grow up and spend time questioning why certain things were said and others ignored. [. . .] As children we don't necessarily feel the need to distinguish external differences, instead they are taught to us in elementary school. What I am getting at is that I am pretty sure my parents had thoughts similar to Helen's that were never brought up, for what reason? Is it really that much easier to teach ignorance than awareness?

A linear plot of the consecutive movements from source to source in this paper's first two paragraphs might look like this:

Text 1 → Mary's emotional response to something in Text 1 → Mary's insight → Mary's childhood experience similar to that in Text 1 → Mary's insight (connection between Texts 1 and 2 and the texts and experience) → direct quotation from Text 1 → common experience → common experience → question based in connection between Text 1 and Mary's experience → generic or general question

Mary interpolates several types of personal reference and involvement into her knowledge-making work in this excerpt. She mentions her own response to a portion of the reading that she found "powerful." She makes a glancing reference to her experience as a child and a more specific reference to her parents. As readers, we understand that because Mary sees a connection between these and the texts, she feels qualified to write from her insights. ("I say this because I had a similar situation . . .") What I identify as Mary's "material association" *ethos* here lies first in her willingness to tell readers about her own experience, which depicts her as a knowledge maker disposed to draw from the personal as well as the textual, and then in her positioning of herself as an observer of the published writing who can understand it from the inside and ally herself with an author who seems to think as she does. These "moves" provide authorization for her interpretive work and for the depth of feeling she expresses in her paper.[33]

Finally, in her discussion of Olsen's stories (primarily "O Yes") Mary relies for support on generic "experiences" she assumes her readers will interpret as she does. Christoph defines maxims she found in her authors' work as "truths that are assumed to need little commentary or proof because the audience understands that they have been tested through time" (672), and notes that some faculty might term these "cliché's" (678). Mary repeats only one well-known cultural saying that I recognize as such in her work: "The truth hurts." Here the phrase is used as a hypothetical insight (though connected in Mary's mind to her read of an actual situation) to explain Helen's actions.[34] Mary does draw from what I will call "common experience," however. This might be better termed "experience deemed common" by the writer who uses it,

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[33] Without knowing how Mary herself conceived her role as an academic writer– that is, as a formal maker of knowledge – in relation to this assignment, I understand myself to be commenting here on *ethos* rather than *persona*.

[34] The origin of the phrase "the truth hurts" was not in any of the collections of quotations I consulted.

or perhaps "common sense."[35] Twice Mary makes general statements of this type: "We treat children like children – giving them a fairytale understanding of the world – until all of the sudden they are supposed to grow up and spend time [. . .]" and "As children we don't necessarily feel the need to distinguish external differences, instead they are taught to us in elementary school." Although I don't really know how Mary intended these to be read, from my point of view I recognize them as re-statements of cultural "truths," truisms their user here seems to consider so well-accepted as to be beyond the need for explanation or support. In fact, Mary uses them to sustain her own points. I also recognize these as the "common experience" of a certain group of people, privileged enough to have lived (or to be able to appear to have lived) a childhood relatively untroubled – one of Christoph's "cultural sensibilities." Mary appeals here, as she did in writing from the personal in an academic situation, to a certain reader – one who will presumably accept and be able to understand the implications for knowledge making inherent in her statements.

Implications for Teaching

Academic inquiry conducted through forms not formally argumentative challenges rigid conceptions of epistemology based in "objectivity." Bizzell implies that different knowledges are part of the importance of mixed[36] and alternative "discourse forms"; these forms are "gaining ground because they allow their practitioners to do intellectual work in ways they could not if confined to traditional academic discourse" (3). As illustration of her latter point, Bizzell retells the story of the blind men each speaking from his limited experience of touching one part of an elephant. "If we want to see [that is, perceive] the whole beast," she concludes, "we should be welcoming, not resisting, the advent of diverse forms of academic discourse" (9).

Phyllis Creme's findings in her study of the use of reflective first person learning journals in two Sussex University (UK) anthropology courses echo Bizzell's points; she notes that
> The learning journals were introduced to allow students to engage in different kinds of writing and therefore in different kinds of knowledge production from the essay [i.e., formal academic writing] [. . .] they allowed students to be more 'provisional' and more 'personal' [in their writing]. (100)

At the end of the study Creme concluded that
> By giving greater scope for the personal in the academic setting [the journals] allowed student writers to incorporate into their university writing ways of knowing that are usually absent from it [. . .] By asking students to write differently, the journals allowed them to think differently. (110)

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[35] I have borrowed "common experience" from Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, who use the term in a very different sense (169-170).

[36] Bizzell discusses this at more length. I've identified also an on-line example of a "mixed" form and its justification: Writing about her experience of an abusive relationship, Mary Lee Judah structured her work into two columns, the first for excerpts from "objective" research-based writings on the topic, and the second for excerpts from her journals contemporary to the experience. The columns are interrupted by occasional sections of reflection extending across the entire page. In one such section, she writes, "Not wanting to lose my voice, myself, in that of academic discourse, I returned through my work and allowed myself to re-enter it with the hope of not becoming an (im) partial person writing from a world removed from my reality" (Judah).

This different way of thinking was in Creme's opinion the fruit of a more "confident authorial self" (110).[37]

I'm committed to what Zeiger calls "enfranchising the spirit of inquiry" ("Exploratory" 454) in writing, as part of teaching thinking in my college classroom. I see value in writing that does something other than try to "move the reader to one and only one conclusion" ("Exploratory" 456) – that allows students to make knowledge that is other than argumentative and/or convergent, that is, through what Bizzell calls "diverse forms of academic discourse" (9). In analyzing Mary's work and that of the other writers in this study as "diverse forms," I have perforce understood their explicit presentations of self as an integral part of knowledge making. This is in keeping with my general intent of taking seriously students' writing. But where does analysis of author presentation in assigned student papers leave me, as these students' faculty? What does it tell me about ways to teach and evaluate writing – and hence knowledge making -- more effectively?

At the moment, my answers to these questions are tentative. Jane Hindman joins many others in demanding that scholarly writing voicing the personal – one type of alternative academic discourse – also *be* scholarly; that is, writing engaged in "making new knowledge of relevance [. . .] and/or applying existing knowledge(s) and/or theorizing rather than simply relating personal knowledge [. . .]" (10). In the context of this study, I would add the suggestion that explicit self-presentation in academic writing should somehow contribute to one or more of these tasks, particularly in the writing of professional scholars. It may be that the type of "Researcher's Tale" Wall discusses or the "learning vignette" I identified in student work is also useful as an authorizing strategy, perhaps especially as a part of progression toward full author presence – a conjecture suggesting further study, of academic writers' work over time.

In the excerpt above, Mary seems to be working with insights new to her (Hindman's "making new knowledge"), by documenting her recognition in a published text of something that she now also recognizes in her own experience. She also "applies existing knowledge" (derived from personal experience) to "O Yes." Although it is not "theorizing" in the sense of applying an external frame or concept to a text or experience, Mary's activity is relevant to our program work of collaborative knowledge making, as it concerns insights and interpretations related to two of our texts. Mary presents herself in her paper as a knowledge-maker with some facility: Her work is multifaceted in that she draws on several types of sources and finds several grounds on which to authorize herself to speak. It is skillful in that she makes connections over time, between text and text, and between life and texts, and also in that she can move from the particular (the short story, her experience) to crafting general questions ("Is it really that much easier to teach ignorance than awareness?"). And Mary's work is engaged in that it portrays her involvement as both thinker and feeler – a thinker who even in informal writing follows one important academic convention (source citation). As such, Mary prepares to travel beyond "relating personal knowledge," although in this excerpt of her longer paper she has not yet moved very far down that path.

When I chose to analyze Mary's work (including its self presentation) in its relation to knowledge making, rather than to assess whether this paper excerpt met or didn't meet objective

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[37] Creme attributes her terminology and thinking related to "authorial self" to Roz Ivanič (qtd. in Creme 102).

standards for formally persuasive academic writing, I allowed myself to recognize its strengths on Mary's own terms. My response to her writing as Mary's faculty, and to the writing of other program members, will be much different operating from this perspective than from a more conventional position. Christoph mentions the fact that faculty can disaffect student writers by rejecting *ethos*-related material in their papers as "wrong or inappropriate," for example, without considering what students see as its function (677). And Zeiger notes the importance to developing thinkers of "an audience disposed to accept and consider ideas rather than to suspect and impeach them" ("Exploratory" 459).

I can envision class discussion about strategies of placement in which program members identify and respond to identity statements and to writer's attempts to locate themselves within social contexts such as our discourse/learning community (Christoph's material associations). How can we position ourselves as people with authority to think about certain texts or ideas, within our writing? What pressures do we feel, as members of a learning community who will make our thoughts public within the group, as we write our weekly papers and respond to those of others? In what forms and contexts does mention of personal experience or of personal reactions to an idea or text further collective inquiry, and in what forms and contexts does it not do so? What do learning scenes or vignettes communicate to readers? Are they generally valuable as part of knowledge making? Do certain types of sources contribute more effectively to the written record of knowledge making than do others (e.g., a reference to another assigned text as compared to information about the writer's emotions), for readers?

In addition, recent treatments of *ethos* in student writing suggest that when thought of as a teaching tool, the concept of self-representation in writing can be used to examine and theorize audience, and writer responsibility and context and the influences of these on the individual writer's work. (See especially Jarratt and Reynolds). Such work necessarily encompasses consideration of the role of "the personal" and of self-presentation in academic writing and in scholarly work in general – discussion, that is, of models and ideas related to knowledge making, and of the partial and contingent nature of all knowing.

By recognizing explicit self-presentation as part of knowledge-making in academic writing, and from my position of valuing informal exploration, I can respond to Mary's paper with a scale such as Marshall's assessment categories of "Nascent, Emerging, Ripening and Ready" (2) rather than from a deficit model. I might begin a reply to Mary's paper by identifying her knowledge making process, as documented above. Mary draws from several sources: an assigned reading, emotions, experience, and common wisdom. Are these effective sources to use in the discourse context? (I would say mostly yes, as this is a women's studies program, and I might also suggest additional sources.) I would like to talk with Mary about her "common experience" statements, though, exploring what happens to perceptions of an author's *ethos* when s/he assumes monolithic experience among her readers, and identifying techniques a writer might use to avoid making this assumption.

Personal experience apparently led Mary to her insight into the text, which she reads with the authority of knowing something about an important issue discussed there – a useful position to claim. She may see herself as related to knowledge making through experience; this is the expertise that enables her participation. As a reader, I need more information about what Mary

sees as the connections between Helen's silence and the failed relationship in the world of "O Yes" in particular. I'm also interested in Mary's question about whether it is "easier to teach ignorance than awareness." How might Mary explore an answer, using our texts? One approach might be to think more about barriers in the story and in life to teaching "awareness," and also more about the difficulties and price of "teach[ing] ignorance." Finally, I'm interested in whether Mary sees differences between her own experience and what happens in the story, and in what those differences might add to our developing knowledge about the relationship between silence and truth. If Mary were to rewrite this paper, program members might learn even more about her own experience, as part of her work with the text. In accepting this as a valid part of Mary's process of thinking, I would understand myself and others to be acknowledging her presentation of herself as someone with insight and interest in learning to share. Part of my teaching approach over a quarter or the length of a program might include suggesting additional ways authors can claim authority, such as asking substantive questions about the relationship of experience to concept and theory.

Final Appraisal
In undertaking one final analysis of the students' writings as a whole, I read through the papers and peer responses looking for what was *not* in them. I have mentioned the (to me) surprising absence of anecdote, stories of experience that took place outside of teaching and learning at Evergreen; I had expected to find self-reflexive work in which students drew connections between learning from the program and incidents in their own lives. Instead, the personal in these pieces of writing was related to what Ronald, Reynolds, and Christoph refer to as the "public self" – which I think of, in a learning community engaged in collaborative knowledge making, as the self that can reasonably be supposed to be observed by others -- rather than the "private" (Ronald 39, 39-41; Reynolds 333, 332-334; Christoph 674).

I also thought I would discover that student writers relied on the personal in ways far less useful to knowledge making and collaboration than I in fact found. Instead, they employed self presentation functionally within the highly-constructed and intensely social environment of an Evergreen learning community. (A temporary setting that ceases to operate only after completion of two evaluations, the student's own and that of a faculty, of the student's work as a maker of knowledge.) It did strike me as somewhat disappointing that general student depiction of learning was situated in individual or two-person activity, rather than wider collaboration, although the type of data I used may have shaped this observation. (I would expect that video taken of a seminar session, for example, would leave a different impression than a peer response written by one student to another.) Finally, I was at first startled by the almost universal lack of critical metadiscourse in the papers and responses; writers preferred to focus on ideas rather than on how published authors handled them. This is perhaps not truly surprising, however, given the introductory nature of program content and the "inquiry" nature of the assignment.

I've said that my goal in conducting this SOTL research is to learn better how to respond to and teach the art of written knowledge making, of which the traditional argumentative essay is but one aspect. In examining selected examples of informal exploratory writing and peer response, we've seen that student-authors clearly did undertake the task of self-representation. Writers presented themselves explicitly through first person statements as personally engaged both

intellectually and emotionally in learning, and also worked to craft more detailed self-portrayals communicating thought. Most relied in part on a specifically narrative strategy to help them accomplish this, although rather than telling stories from life outside of school, they recounted short vignettes of learning as evidence of their work and related practices. These "vignettes" or "scenes" can be read as documenting openness to and demonstrating expertise in learning, and as evidence of their authors' commitment as active knowledge makers, collaborators in learning who expect others to engage with their work. Students also crafted *ethos* through specific identity statements, and through choices to refer to "authorities" outside of our texts – personal experience and culturally-specific "common wisdom" were two such sources.

There is more to developing scholarly writers (and thinkers) as defined by Hindman above than teaching academic conventions of logic and argument. Reading students' work seriously as revelatory of their present understanding of the role and activity of the knowledge maker opens opportunity for more substantive, and potentially more generative, response to their work. Given this, the question that immediately arises for me within the context of this study is, "What are we doing to teach our students and ourselves about ways to represent self in collaborative academic knowledge-making, ways that are useful and effective in relation to the activities of making and communicating knowledge?" This question is quickly followed by, "In our assignments, and through our assessment and evaluation of student scholarly work, what kinds of knowledge are we inviting students to make? And what kinds of thinker-writers are we inviting our students to become?"

Questions for Further Research

- How will additional qualitative evidence from student writers support and/or change the interpretations written in this paper? For example, what might analysis of *ethos* in student self-evaluations add to this work? And how would interviews or other "ethnographic evidence" change the observations offered here?
- Are "learning vignettes" a widespread feature of students' writing for Evergreen courses and programs, and in inquiry-based learning communities elsewhere? If so, can these be analyzed for evidence over time of students' development as knowledge makers?
- What do students do to craft *ethos* in collaborative knowledge making work that is not written?
- In what ways do Evergreen students address *ethos* in their formal academic writing?
- How do students shape self-representation in personal narrative – that is, in written assignments that ask them to recount or address personal experience? How do other members of learning community respond to the personal in these writings?

- How do students perceive knowledge making and their role in it? For them, what is the role of self-presentation, and of assigned writing, in learning? In particular, what do students see as their tasks in informal exploratory writing? What, for them, is the work of this writing inside, and outside, of a particular program? What do they see as this writing's role in their learning?
- In what ways do student writers see themselves as empowered or as restrained in terms of *ethos* in their knowledge making work? In terms of assigned writing in general?
- How do students present themselves outside of courses and programs, in their campus and off-campus lives, and how does this relate to their self-representation in courses and programs?

- What kinds of assignments and learning activities are faculty at Evergreen and elsewhere crafting, which directly address self-representation in knowledge making and collaborative learning work? How are these faculty assessing and evaluating relevant student work?
- What, if anything, do faculty at Evergreen and elsewhere do to "manage" the personal in relation to collaborative knowledge making? Should this in fact be undertaken? And if so, who should do it -- faculty? Students? What is "respect" in responding to personal stories and experience? In formulating them?

- What do the literatures of authority, agency and voice in student writing, and theories originating in feminism, post-colonialism and elsewhere, offer to these explorations?

- Where do "interdisciplinary" and "*ethos*" mesh and diverge, in academic writing?

- How do answers to these questions differ across "race," ethnicity, class, age, Deaf, illness and dis/ability, gender, sexuality, religion, education level and so on?

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