“I FEEL SMARTER WHEN I WRITE”:
THE ACADEMIC WRITING EXPERIENCES OF FIVE COLLEGE WOMEN

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By
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As a way of examining how writing helps college students balance an understanding of subject matter with self and social understanding as well as develop their abilities to participate in the public realm, this qualitative study focused on the writing experiences of five college students, with particular attention paid to the assignments that allowed them to assert their ideas in response to the ideas of others. Women were selected for this study because members of traditionally marginalized or silenced populations stand to gain a great deal if their writing gives them the opportunity to experiment with dialogic argument. The five participants were interviewed over the course of two years about their college writing. The study also involved analyzing the participants’ papers, interviewing their professors, and examining the assignments that prompted the papers.

The study revealed that all five participants engaged in dialectical argumentation to some degree, but they were rarely required by the assignment to marshal evidence to support their views. The amount of page space devoted to their own convictions and ideas indicated that the vast majority of their writing was devoted to the subject matter and/or others’ ideas. If the assignments did not demand that the participants put forth their ideas assertively and construct personally meaningful positions, they avoided doing
so. It is important for educators to consider that students who are reticent to speak in class and/or socialized to avoid conflict can gain through their writing invaluable experience and confidence in articulating their views and putting forth their ideas assertively.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Most college students are required to take one or two composition courses, and beyond that they engage in the process of writing in many of their other courses. Emig (1977) explained why students are often asked to write as part of their education:

“Writing represents a unique mode of learning—not merely valuable, not merely special, but unique” (p. 122). Several prominent cognitive psychologists’ work with language supports this view:

Some of the most distinguished contemporary psychologists have at least implied such a role for writing as heuristic. Lev Vygotsky, A. R. Luria, and Jerome Bruner, for example, have all pointed out that higher cognitive functions, such as analysis and synthesis, seem to develop most fully only with the support system of verbal language—particularly, it seems, of written language. (p. 122)

Writing is understood to be an integral part of education, since the act of composing provides a valuable opportunity for students to learn. Richardson (2008) insisted that writing “is thought itself. . . . Papers are the working out of ideas” (p. 47).

Writing has heuristic potential and practical value. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (1989) opens their “Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing” with an emphasis on the importance of writing: “A democracy demands citizens who can read critically and write clearly and cogently” (p. 1). One aim of higher education, few would dispute, is to
prepare individuals to be critical and creative thinkers who are well-rounded, participating citizens. Writing is viewed as a vital part of the journey toward that end.

**Nature of the Problem**

Writing is a heuristic, one important way students can develop as thinkers. That idea, however, is about the only view of writing that scholars share. Fulkerson (2005) declared that “At the turn of the twenty-first century, there is genuine controversy . . . over the goal of teaching writing in college. . . . We differ about what our courses are supposed to achieve, about how effective writing is best produced” (p. 679, 681). Even the Writing Program Administrators (2000), charged with compiling a list of outcomes for first-year composition, developed nothing more than generic and broad statements indicating that students should exhibit an understanding of rhetorical appropriateness, the process of composing, and the conventions of the language. They added, with the same glaring lack of specificity, that as students continue to write in college, they ought to build on those basic skills. It is evident, according to Knodt (2006), that “our biggest failure in helping students and colleagues to understand what is college-level writing is our failure to be explicit in what we seek” (p. 156).

Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) pointed out that a definition of college-level writing has “confounded, eluded, and divided teachers” for quite some time (p. xiii). Due to this divide over what constitutes effective college-level writing and what writing should accomplish for students, “we appear to have reached an unfortunate impasse . . . and this is problematic for all sorts of reasons” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 3). Research on writing across the curriculum (WAC) has also been described as “rife with controversy, with ideological
debates . . . polarizing the discussions” (Lester et al., 2003, p. 9). Most administrators and faculty in higher education support writing in college classrooms and the basic goals of WAC programs: to promote active learning, to improve critical thinking through writing (Ochsner & Fowler, 2004; Thaiss & Porter, 2010). But, the thwarted conversations and the divisions in the field have resulted in limited research on the effectiveness of writing across the curriculum that led Ochsner and Fowler (2004) “to question the movement’s actual achievements in meeting these goals” (p. 117).

Lester et al. (2003) explained, “Despite their differences, WAC scholars do agree that students need to have more control over their writing” (p. 28). Their study at City University of New York found, however, “that this was not happening, that students were primarily writing in very limited and teacher- and/or text-book-controlled ways” (p. 28). Writing can serve as a heuristic and promote active learning, Carter, Ferzli, and Wiebe (2007) insisted, only when and if it serves “as the critical link between doing and knowing” (p. 299). While Lester et al. (2003) did not propose to “have all the answers” as to what ought to be done in response to their study’s troubling findings, they called for more studies that work directly with student writing (p. 27). More research focused on the “types of writing that students are actually doing” might help to “concretize the theoretical perspectives from which most WAC research begins” (p. 27). After all, as Ochsner and Fowler (2004) pointed out, what students “learn by using writing depends on their response to a specific task” (p. 126). Written tasks are routinely given to college students in their various courses; yet, typically the research on college writing has paid
little attention to the actual types of writing assigned in the disciplines that challenge and
benefit students as learners.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to find out what types of assignments were required
of five women at one university and what rhetorical approaches they took when
completing those assignments.

**Statement of the Problem**

Dewey (1938) argued that human beings learn best as a result of the “interaction”
coined this holistic orientation and emphasis on interaction “3S understanding” and
suggested that students be encouraged to consider “the relationship between good
subject-matter learning and good self and social learning” (p. 95). Teaching for such
“deep and sophisticated learning,” Wiggins and McTyhe (1998) insisted, is indeed “a
vital aim of schooling” (p. 5).

While there are many ways to examine how the writing curriculum in college is
designed and implemented so as to facilitate learning, this study sought to determine how
often writing provided five college students with opportunities to develop an in-depth
understanding of the subject matter balanced with self and social learning. As a way of
examining what types of writing encourage “elaborated and enriched understandings of
subject matter” (Lester et al, 2003, p. 26), this study paid particular attention to the
writing assignments that allowed the participants to shape and assert their ideas in
response to the ideas of others. One goal of the study was to determine how often five
students had been given college writing assignments that provided “a way for the personal and disciplinary to interact in a dialectical fashion rather than one in which one voice must be silenced for the other to speak” (LeCourt, 1996, p. 400).

This study worked off of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule’s (1986) notion of dialectic which entails “listening to others while simultaneously speaking with and listening to the self” (p. 145). Listening to and integrating multiple voices on an issue is an essential aspect of public discourse:

the underlying structure of effective academic writing—and of responsible public discourse—resides not just in stating our own ideas, but in listening closely to the others around us, summarizing their views in a way that they will recognize, and responding with our own ideas in kind. (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 3)

One way of determining if and under what conditions students were having those dialectical opportunities was to focus specifically, as this study did, on when the participants engaged in personally meaningful argumentative writing. According to Graff (2003), “argument literacy, the ability to listen, summarize, and respond, is rightly viewed as central to being educated” (p. 3). Miller and Charney (2008) asserted that experiences with argumentative writing—with learning to listen and then respond—are offered to students as a way to empower them “to act more effectively in civic, academic, and professional contexts” (p. 592).

This study focused on the academic writing experiences of five college women, specifically, because research has shown that many women are uncomfortable with argument and lack experience asserting their ideas (Belenky et al., 1986; Bolker, 1979;
Gilligan, 1982; Tannen, 1994; Hammill 2007). The five participants selected for the study were not selected randomly, nor were they chosen with the goal of making generalizations about the writing experiences of all students or even college women. Women were selected for this study because members of traditionally marginalized or silenced populations stand to gain a great deal if their writing gives them the opportunity to formulate, assert, and test out their ideas by integrating them with the views of others. But, many women and silenced students may avoid seizing this opportunity if by doing so they can still achieve the aims of the assignment, especially if their ideas contrast with the views of others and articulating them means engaging in argument. This study was undertaken with the goal of determining the range of writing opportunities five college women had and the rhetorical approaches they took when successfully completing those assignments. The study involved interviewing the women about their writing as well as examining their papers written while in college and the assignments that led to them.

Weisser (2002) explained that experiences with college writing ought to prepare students for success in future careers and public discourse so that they might “become active citizens who are capable of using language to defend themselves, voice their opinions, and take part in public debates” (p. 94). One crucial research question in particular, regarding the assignments required of students in college, must be asked: Are students having writing opportunities that encourage them to develop their ideas and to gain experience participating in the public domain? The opening line in the CCCC “Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing” (1989) points clearly to the importance of citizen participation in a democracy. This
study sought to determine if five college women had been given opportunities through their writing to assert and test their ideas, make themselves heard in the larger, public conversation, and try out their voices—the very voices upon which a democracy rests.

**Research Questions**

The following five questions guided this investigation:

1. How much did the research co-participants write while in college?
2. In what types of writing did they engage?
3. Which papers did they feel benefited them most and why?
4. Where and to what extent is there evidence in the portfolios of their written work that they learned how to form and support personally meaningful positions in the context of a larger conversation?
5. What types of assignments required the writers to form and support claims of their own? And conversely, what types seemed to preclude such engagement?

**Conceptual Framework**

I have worked in an English Department at a small Midwestern university for the past sixteen years, and although I have established collegial relationships with the males in the department, I have connected more closely with my female colleagues, which I attribute to the investment we make in our teaching and the ethic of care we embrace that results, at an institution like ours, in very little time left for our scholarship. In addition to the value we place on pedagogy, my three female colleagues and I, unlike our male counterparts, are self-doubters in terms of our ability to contribute significantly to the body of scholarship in the field of English. This disparity has always disturbed me; my
female colleagues and I occupy a disadvantaged position in academia because of the difficulty we have finding the time and confidence necessary to develop and publish our scholarship. There exists, among the women in my work environment, a crisis of confidence in ourselves as scholars and a subjugation of self to others.

After a departmental external review committee pointed out the gender differences and inequity in our department and more extensive conversations took place among the women and also with our male colleagues, I began to understand that perhaps these differences exist because of the different ways as men and women we have been socialized to approach our work as well as the greater ease with which my male colleagues operate in the public domain of the institution and our field.

In the fall of 2007, I read an article in *College Composition and Communication* called “Teaching and Parenting: Who Are the Members of Our Profession?”, and I saw myself and my female colleagues represented there. Hammill (2007) conducted a qualitative exploration of four women compositionists, all of whom shared “a narrative of self-doubt in regard to her own abilities as a scholar” (p. 99). Captured in Hammill’s article were four stories not unlike my own or the story of my female colleagues: “All of these participants identify with teaching more than scholarship, but they still enjoy writing and publishing” (p. 99). Hammill cited Kirsch who claimed that “academic women lack the same level of confidence as their academic male counterparts because they doubt their own scholarly pursuits and underestimate their own authority. . . women do not believe in their own academic abilities and knowledge” (p. 100). Instead, these women, like my colleagues and me, aligned themselves with the act of teaching and were
comfortable with their roles as effective teachers but “uncomfortable asserting and admitting their own authority in the field of composition” (Hammill, 2007, p. 107). My female colleagues and I believe our primary responsibility at an institution like ours is to our students. While it is true that we gain fulfillment and a sense of purpose from our teaching, perhaps we remain so heavily invested in our courses because we are more confident teaching our students than involving ourselves in what seem like self-serving acts: researching and seeking publication. And, while we feel assured of ourselves as teachers, we feel less confident adopting the assertive stance and authoritative writing style necessary in academic discourse.

Hammill (2007) was careful to point out the ways in which most women are socialized:

Researchers have shown that socialization teaches many women to be nurturing and caring (Belenky et al.), and it also teaches them not to argue, but most scholarship includes argument as its main form of discourse. Women might resist agonistic publication because the public domain is unfamiliar and gendered as male. (p. 107)

The reasons my female colleagues and I publish less than our male counterparts are numerous, but a significant contributing factor is that we lack the experience and familiarity necessary to navigate with confidence the contentiousness of the public domain.

Hammill (2007) referred to this “rhetorical reticence” as a type of resistance. Regardless of the empowering labels found for this stance, however, it places many of
those who succumb to it in an inferior position: “resistance to rhetorical authority puts some women at a disadvantage, as publishing oftentimes brings tenure, advancement, and notoriety in the field” (p. 107). Advancement and notoriety yield public recognition, validation, and a sense of intellectual accomplishment that my female colleagues and I lack. While I realize this, I still find it nearly impossible to do anything about it.

Hammill (2007) relied on Goulston to offer an explanation for such tension:

Learning to speak and to write in all ways that present oneself as a doer and a thinker in academia and in the labor market involves for many women a challenge to their very sense of self. . . . For me and for many women, learning to write as a strong-voiced, confident individual uncomfortably jolts one’s sense of self and one’s female stereotype. (p. 107)

I always thought of myself “as a doer and a thinker,” as someone who was “strong-voiced,” if not in my profession then definitely throughout my years as a student in school. But after reading Belenky et al.’s well-known Women’s Ways of Knowing (1986), I realized that I had mistakenly assumed that because my words had never been met with hostility they had been received and I had been encouraged to develop confidence in my voice. I now recall that the words I used and the ideas I shared, particularly as a student in school, were very rarely my own; I mimicked those around me, particularly those in positions of authority. I started to realize that more could have been done throughout my schooling, especially in college, to help me develop confidence in my ability to participate in arguments and assert my ideas. Perhaps such experiences would have enabled me to combat the self-doubt I have in the workplace and navigate the
public domain. I began to understand that my education was lacking; it should have better prepared me to defend and maintain my views, my words, and my sense of agency. I started to pay attention to the opportunities and experiences my current students were having in college. I began to wonder if I or others have been assisting our students, females in particular, in developing their abilities to navigate the public domain. To what degree am I empowering my students while I have the privilege of influencing them? How am I helping them? How does writing across the curriculum at my institution, the very curriculum that I as the Director of Composition help shape, assist them in developing their confidence in their abilities to participate in public conversations by expressing what they know when what they know conflicts with others’ ideas? I do not want to work as hard as I do as an English professor and Director of Composition only to perpetuate the cycle of smart women who doubt themselves and lack experience asserting and supporting claims of their own.

Context of the Study

The university at which I teach is a small liberal arts university attended mostly by students of the Christian faith; it is a tuition-driven institution that distinguishes and prides itself on being a relatively conservative safe-haven. Many parents feel confident that having their child attend a private, Christian university is well worth the $29,000 in tuition, room and board. Most of my students have left the confines of family to live on campus, and the majority of them are experiencing the tension that comes with going to college and striking out on one’s own yet remaining true to or at least on good terms with the places from which and the people from whom one has come. I believe that this
tension is felt more acutely by my female students than my male students, however; and many factors contribute to this, a predominate one being that they are from traditional Christian families who are not entirely comfortable with their daughters beginning to forge their own identities and belief systems, worldviews and voices.

One semester during a discussion of Audre Lorde’s “Transforming Silence into Language and Action” in my first-year composition class, several of my twelve male students stated that they had not felt silenced in any significant way in their lifetimes whereas nearly all the female students signaled by a show of hands and then a sharing of anecdotes that they had been stifled. Over the years, I have found during class discussions that most of my male students are willing to participate, especially when it comes to boldly asserting their opinions, more often than my female students. According to Tannen (1994), males are often socialized to be aggressive, domineering, and unapologetic for it, and many (though obviously not all) of them speak their words—in a public domain gendered as male—with a self-assurance that comes from knowing that when they talk, people listen.

College ought to assist students, male and female, in building their knowledge and speaking what they know. I am interested particularly, though, in how much of college for women involves them writing confidently and with conviction, assured that others are paying attention. Most of my female students are capable writers who enjoy writing, but I see them acting to some degree like those whom Bolker (1979) identified over thirty years ago, alluding to Chaucer’s intelligent yet dull character, as the “Griseldas of the world”—the good girls (p. 907). Part of the good girl’s problem, at least in terms of what
Bolker discerned, is that she thinks too little of herself when she writes, and the results of paying excessive attention to the reader is a “style that aims to please all and offend none, one which ‘smiles’ all the time, shows very little of a thought process, but strives instead to produce a neat package tied with a ribbon” (p. 908). Annas (1985) too found this type of approach in the writing of good female students, “who early learned how to turn out polished, correct, and fluent essays which generally engage only the surface of their selves, which are detached, objective, passionless and take few risks” (p. 368). This same description of writing applies to much of the proficient writing done by male students in college as well; and although I focused on women in this study, the findings point to a need for more challenging and engaging writing assignments that benefit all students.

As a college undergraduate, I often relied on the “good girl” approach to writing. It served me well—or so I thought. I never gained any experience, however, maintaining an argument, exploring what it was I actually believed, becoming comfortable with the sound of my own voice piercing the air of a classroom, engaging with others’ views and supporting mine during any sort of confrontation, or asserting myself in writing. Good girl writing reaps a letter grade payoff, according to Bolker (1979), but “the personal costs are high” (p. 908). Belenky et al. (1986) described aptly the good girl deadend: “Much time had been wasted being good; and for many women the relentless effort to be good had prevented the development of a more authentic voice” (p. 209).

In my teaching and conversing with women students, I have found that many of them are ready and willing, when nudged to do so, to cast off the shackles of compliance
and to write their way into a dialogue. But I fear they are just a modernized version of Bolker’s Griseldas, perhaps more confident in their writing than the women Bolker studied but still inexperienced with argument and hesitant to assert their authority, even when given the opportunity to do so.

**Significance of the Study**

Did the five women in this study have the opportunities through the writing they did in college to develop a sense of authority and learn to assert their ideas within a larger conversation? In asking this question, I find myself in what Annas (1985) called a “pedagogical dilemma.” She articulated the concerns of many women in the profession:

> Can we teach writing to our students in a way that validates who they are, allows them to handle their materials confidently and comfortably, with discipline and integrity, and also gives them the survival skills to write in a way that will be acceptable to the world that we are training them to enter? This pedagogical dilemma may be grounded in part in our conflicts about our own writing as women who are trying to be heard in a profession that values hierarchy, competitiveness, detachment, and objectivity. . . . (p. 62)

Undeniably, my life as a self-doubting female in a profession that prizes self-assurance and authoritativeness prompted me to focus on the writing experiences the co-participants had while in college and to ask the question I did: Where and how much evidence is there in the portfolios of their written work that the five college women in this study learned how to form and support personally meaningful positions in the context of a larger conversation?
This study contributes to the research on writing pedagogy by determining the types of assignments that afforded five students the opportunity to develop the ability and confidence needed to make themselves heard in the world. It also examines the rhetorical approaches and attitudes five college women took when completing their writing tasks and why they assumed the approaches and attitudes they did.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The first part of this chapter provides a brief historical overview of the context for the approach to curriculum problem-solving taken in this study. The second part of this chapter draws on the work of psychologists studying female development, with a particular emphasis on the complicated experiences young adult females have with school. It also includes an overview of several studies in education and composition that focus on the difficulties young women encounter with their writing. The third part of this chapter provides a review of post-structural feminist literature that emphasizes the type of teaching that best serves female students, particularly as writers. The fourth section reviews a movement in composition studies known as expressivistic rhetoric, with a particular examination of the feminist re-envisioning of it. The last section points to a need for a blending of feminist theory and composition theory into writing pedagogy that fosters dialogic writing and skill with argument.

Teaching for Self, Social, and Subject Matter Understanding

Henderson and Gornik (2007) framed “the paradigmatic, organizing problem of curriculum work as teaching for a disciplinary subject matter understanding that is integrated with disciplined democratic self and social understanding” (p. 232). Their holistic approach is grounded in rich and varied “research studies that have clearly demonstrated the vital relationship between cognitive, social, and emotional learning (Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004)” (p. 232). Tanner and Tanner (2007) located holistic education within two centuries of
curriculum research: “The problem of curriculum balance is a difficult and important one and is closely tied to the democratic ideal of all individuals having the fullest education possible” (p. 475).

Henderson and Gornik (2007) argued that Dewey’s “balanced subject/self/social approach was directed toward providing students with active, participatory educational experiences” (p. 232). Such experiences in school are meant to contribute to and provide the way for more than a conveyance of information. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) pointed out that it is commonly thought that understanding means that “a student has something more than just textbook knowledge and skill” (p. 5). Sharing the views of curriculum theorists who espoused a holistic approach to education throughout centuries of American curriculum work, Wiggins and McTighe (1998) advocated “a multifaceted view of what makes up a mature understanding” (p. 44).

One way educators provide opportunities for students to embark “on their individual journeys of understanding” (Henderson & Gornik, 2007) is through the papers they ask students to write. The process of writing can cultivate and the written product can serve to demonstrate a student’s mature subject/self/social understanding. Henderson and Gornik (2007) suggested that students demonstrate “subject matter understanding through expressive and idiosyncratic performances that are integrated with self and social understanding” (p. 44). Crick (2003) applied Dewey to the teaching of writing specifically: “Dewey suggests that our ‘experiences’ acquire form and meaning only through the ongoing practices of artistic expression, reflection, revision, and communication” (p. 272). Crick called his essay “Composition as Experience” because
“it advances a view of writing as a constitutive and ongoing practice whose purpose is not to transmit static ideas in language but to transform our lived experience in time” (p. 259-260). Writing can enable students to “transform” their experience: “a student literally changes in the midst of creating and reflecting upon the words she is writing on the page” (p. 272). Writing assigned in college courses “is a means to connect writing to learning on all content areas. Writing is the process through which students think on paper, explore ideas, raise questions, attempt solutions, uncover processes, build and defend arguments, brainstorm, introspect, and figure out what is going on” (Lester et al., 2003, p. 7). The writing assigned to students in school can be a vital part of their journeys toward holistic understanding.

Young Adult Females’ Diminished Sense of Self

Gilligan (1982) reported that during adolescence girls begin to doubt themselves as knowers: “girls are not saying what they know and eventually not knowing it as well” (p. xxii). In her study, she focused on the impediments to the psychological development of adolescent females and identified the risks and dangers that often result:

[A]dolescence sets the stage for a kind of privatization of women’s experience and impedes the development of women’s political voice and presence in the public world. The dissociation of girls’ voices from girls’ experiences in adolescence, so that girls are not saying what they know and eventually not knowing it as well, is a prefiguring of many women’s sense of having the rug of experience pulled out from under them, or of coming to experience their feelings and thoughts not as real but as fabrication. (p. xxii)
Females often tend to view their identity as connected to service, obligations, and responsibility to others: “a fusion of identity and intimacy, noted repeatedly in women’s development” (p. 159), a fusion strengthened and reinforced at school where girls and boys are treated differently (AAUW, 1992). In school, according to Pipher (1994), “girls are more likely [than boys] to be praised for their clothing, behaving properly, and obeying rules” (p. 62). Girls’ self-esteem and opinion of their sex decline as they proceed through school: “They emerge from adolescence with a diminished sense of their worth as individuals” (Pipher, 1994, p. 63). Bruce, Brown, McCracken and Bell-Nolan (2008) emphasized the gains that have been made in education due to feminist pedagogy and the benefits for all students that have resulted. They proceeded, cautiously optimistic, with the reminder: “Though perhaps faring better on achievement tests, girls still struggle to define positive and equitable gender roles” (p. 1); and “while adolescent girls may ‘handle school,’ cultural attacks on girls seem relentless” (p. 1). Girls today may be “handling school.” But, is school playing a role in preparing them to counter the cultural attacks on them and bolstering their sense of self-worth that diminishes throughout adolescence?

Belenky et al. (1986) found that even females who were high-achievers in school underestimated their abilities and were consumed with self-doubt. Many interviewees in their study who had attended or were attending college at the time reported that they often spent their time in college functioning at the level of what Belenky et al. coined “procedural knowledge,” subordinating “themselves to the demands of authorities,” feeling “like chameleons” who took on “the color of any structure they inhabit” (p. 129).
Their written words judged as successful in college were the mere echoes of the voices of authoritative others. Belenky et al. found that the writing done by successful college women in their study reflected their perspectives on how knowledge was made. Most of the college women in their study had transcended the perspectives they coined as “silence” and “received knowledge” and were operating from one of the following three perspectives: *subjective knowledge*, a perspective involving a view of themselves as intuitive knowers, relying on a highly private and personal experience, immune to the perspective of others; *procedural knowledge*, a position from which knowers embrace multiple perspectives and view knowledge as a process, one that is highly impersonal, requiring rigorous analysis and disinterested reason; or *constructed knowledge*, a perspective that allows them to view knowledge as constructed and themselves as capable of co-constructing it with others, valuing both subjective and objective ways of knowing.

Bolker (1979) focused her work specifically on two female college students who proceeded in their writing to mimic others, much in the same way as Belenky et al.’s “chameleons” (1986, p. 129). Bolker described a successful female student from Harvard and one from Yale who were unsatisfied with their writing, “uncomfortable with it, yet not knowing quite why, or what to do about it” (p. 906). The students—whom she dubbed “Griseldas” after Chaucer’s dutiful but seemingly dull character—reported that they lacked a sense of ownership of it, and each student felt a certain “disappointment at not being able to make herself heard” (p. 906). Many college students who have become adept at the academic achievement game, like the students Bolker studied, spend time churning out papers that are examples of what Hairston (2005) called explanatory
writing. In an explanatory type of assignment, “the writer either knows most of what he or she is going to say before starting to write or knows where to find the material needed.” Hairston (2005) explained the approach one must take to these types of papers: “The material for such a paper already exists—you’re not going to create it or discover it . . . your job as a writer is to dig out the material, organize it, and shape it into a clearly written, carefully supported essay” (p. 81). This type of clearly written essay is based on material that already exists, which the writer “digs” out; and it need not be—and usually is not—dialogic or personally meaningful.

Two more recent studies focused specifically on working-class adolescents and young women. Ashley (2001) studied four working-class female undergraduate proficient writers who, like the Griseldas in Bolker’s study, felt a tension that had to do “with ‘getting it right’ for a teacher” (p. 504). She reported that the participants experienced “an absence of feeling, self, or commitment in what they wrote for school” (p. 500). Moving from one course to another, writing for a different audience—the professor—each time, the students felt it was best to write about a subject and in a style that limited a connection to who they were as individuals:

All 4 case study participants claimed that obscuring or suppressing one’s self and one’s personal commitments was an effective method of producing school writing, one that had served them sufficiently well through high school and college to that point. Even when teachers were described as “caring what [students] think” the demands of changing from one course and classroom to
another and one set of idiosyncratic expectations to another often seemed to overpower the encouragement of self in school writing. (p. 507)

The dutiful “good girls” invested themselves in playing the academic achievement game, “finding out what teachers wanted and trying over and over again, when necessary, to produce texts with the desired qualities” (p. 505). “Getting it right” for a teacher is a preoccupation shared by many students, regardless of sex or class; and studies like Ashley’s (2001) seek to contribute to improved writing pedagogy that benefits all students.

In an ethnographic study, Hartman (2006) focused on six working-class girls who developed a “discourse of a ‘Good Student,’ which included hard work, goal orientation, participation, and silence in order to succeed” (p. 82). Hartman determined that the girls who participated in her study “rarely felt comfortable expressing themselves nor did they actively seek out such opportunities. Instead, they purposely stayed quiet as a means to achieve their goals and to protect their carefully constructed identities as Good Students and Good Girls” (p. 101). One student expressed her preference for listening to others’ opinions and “coming to her own meaning privately” (Hartman, 2006, p. 108). All six girls were “careful to learn and follow the guidelines of assignments precisely, often at the expense of creativity and self-expression” (p. 110). They believed it was in their best interest to be “docile and compliant” in order never to offend their peers or “show up’ another student” (p. 111). Referring to their silence during classroom discussions, Hartman (2006) pointed out that they “sacrificed an opportunity for their own growth and
learning in order to follow the rules, protect others, and play it safe” (p. 111). She ended her study with a warning and an urgent call to action:

If they are rewarded for these domesticating behaviors, the development of their thinking suffers with unexamined assumptions about who they are, their place in the world, and what constitutes a “normal” life for women. Thus, if we want to “gain the voices of the girls” so that they too can be “loud,” we need to examine our practices in the classroom that allow these girls to remain safely silent. (p. 114)

Many female scholars reflect on their own experiences with schooling and recount similar stories involving their propensity to remain safely silent. Miller (2005) in her Sounds of Silence Breaking: Women, Autobiography, and Curriculum, wrote of her early experiences in school and recalled that by sixth grade, despite having a superb teacher, she had “bought into” the system:

I also learned that, in order to receive the sanctioned merits of schooling, to receive his [the teacher’s] official acknowledgement and approval, I had to impersonate the patriarchal inflections found in others’ words, to speak in the modulated serious tones of others’ understandings, to memorize others’ stories, to replicate others’ knowledges. . . . And in my ironic desire to please, to receive authorization, I effectively denied or erased parts of my self. (p. 103)

Bishop (1990) recalled that “When I was a ‘good’ girl in high school, I completed my classwork scrupulously” (p. 339). She was able to sail through college but encountered a difficult transition to graduate school. She did not have high school and undergraduate
experiences that challenged her abilities to assert herself and her ideas—to enter any type
of contentious dialogue. Martin (2000) in her *Coming of Age in Academe* told of a
similar experience she had as a college student:

[S]peaking as one who was herself a quiet student, I only wish that someone had
long ago told me—and that I in turn had told my students—that shy college
applicants turn into deferential, apologetic college seniors who then become
muted graduate students. . . . With the exception of one woman who later became
a super-star of the intelligentsia, I do not recall ever hearing a female philosophy
student voluntarily speak out in class when I was in graduate school. I certainly
never did so myself, and I now know that this was not a healthy state of affairs.
Surely I am not the only female who was tongue-tied in class and to this day
remains so in similar situations. (p. 89)

Martin, like Bishop, survived graduate school but with a sense of regret. She recalled,
“we women generously signed over to them [the men] the in-class practice time in
philosophical discourse that we should have been using to develop our own skills” (p.
89). Martin also mentioned the present-day difficulties she has still with feeling tongue-
tied at times when she knows she has the right to speak. Less tongue-tied was Tompkins
(1996), whose widely-read memoir consisted primarily of a scathing critique of education
and masculinist approaches to teaching: “[W]hen people care about ideas, which means
they have an emotional stake in them, that’s when they jump into debates, find the best
arguments, hang in there when the going gets rough, and feel the excitement and intimacy
of real exchange. For this you have to *have* an idea, as well as permission to fight for it”
Miller, Martin, Bishop, and Tompkins gave themselves permission to voice their ideas and critiques of traditional approaches to education, but only after they had left the confines of operating as “good girls” in a system that rewarded them for their deference and docility.

After surveying the research throughout the seventies, eighties, and nineties (including the Belenky et al. and Gilligan studies), Collins (2008) wrote: “Research across three decades reveals an eerily consistent pattern. . . . girls maintain their silence as a tool for getting along in school and for maintaining good grades” (p. 49). The Griseldas are still among us—in both high schools and colleges—despite our attempts at equity and nonsexist classroom practices. The first female president of Duke University, Nannerl O. Keohane (2003), addressed the cultural expectations about how women should behave and the effect those “suffocating norms” invariably have on female students in the classroom:

These norms are clearly not conducive to equal participation as members of a community of scholars; but they run very deep and are profoundly influential in the lives of our students. They are strongly gender-specific . . . reaching into what is regarded as appropriate in terms of intellectual assertiveness. (para. 22)

We would like to think we’ve come a long way; but, sadly, “[g]irls often do not feel themselves to be the liberated women that our twenty-first century lives would presume (Collins, 2008, p. 23).
Meeting the Needs of Apprehensive and Self-Doubting Female Writers

Belenky et al. (1986) pointed to a need for pedagogy that was ever mindful of the challenges that faced female students and for teachers who recognized that their “first concern is to preserve the students’ fragile newborn thoughts.” Teachers ought to help students “articulate and expand their latent knowledge” (p. 217). Belenky et al. envisioned this sort of educator as a connected teacher or “midwife-teacher,” working counter to the banking model, refusing to dismiss the students’ knowledge-making abilities. Noddings (1984) saw this type of caring teaching as characterized by “engrossment in the other, regard, desire for the other’s well-being” (p. 19.) Grumet (1988) recognized it as grounded in an epistemology that “celebrates the creativity and responsibility of the knower as well as the context and relations within which knowing takes place and comes to form” (p. 16).

The traditional model of education, however, often devalues the vital role of students in the process of knowing and underemphasizes the collaborative endeavor both student and teacher must embark on together. Instead, the traditional approach to education often involves teachers distancing themselves from, challenging, and doubting the student. According to Belenky et al. (1986), this experience is often debilitating for women: “Because so many women are already consumed with self-doubt, doubts imposed from outside are at best redundant and at worst destructive, confirming the women’s own sense of themselves as inadequate knowers” (p. 228). The authors found that this doubting model may not be what’s best for women—or for men. There exist other, far more productive and affirming ways to teach and, in particular, to assign and
engage students in writing. Such approaches involve connection, acceptance, respect, and collaboration—the sort of interaction needed to prompt discovery, growth, and the confidence needed to eventually move on to writing that occurs as part of a contentious but respectful conversation of opposing ideas. Bolker (1979) argued that for the “good girls” in our classrooms to begin to flourish they must write about what matters to them in a style that develops over time under the direction and attention of someone trained to listen and nudge them toward their own powerful ways of knowing and speaking.

McCracken (1992) also advocated for a feminist approach to composition teaching: “it is in writing classes that women and men learn to extend their voices beyond the private sphere, and voice is an aspect of our culture in which sexism is so deeply ingrained we hardly even notice it” (p. 116). She cited Deborah Tannen’s work that examined the differences in the ways men and women talk and listen. McCracken affirmed that “Women and girls come into high school and college writing classes with different discourse experiences than men and boys” (p. 116). As with Belenky et al., McCracken reported that female students are far more likely to respond to and learn from a teacher who acknowledges what they say and write and does so in a supportive rather than combative manner.

The issue of trust and rapport with the teacher was paramount in the development of the non-traditional female college students Greenwood (1987) studied. They reported that their confidence was shaken upon their re-entry, and the teacher played a vital role in the confidence they eventually gained in themselves. The participants in Greenwood’s study attributed their successful transition to teachers who cultivated in them a sense of
what Greene (1995) called “wide-awakeness”—an engagement with the world, an attentiveness not only to others and external events but to one’s self and one’s inner landscape.

It was commonly thought, however, that supportive and nurturing teaching is needed only in elementary schools. McCracken (1992) explained:

The healthy trend at the elementary school level to encourage children of both sexes to develop a repertoire of voices in a whole language environment has met with great resistance in the upper grades. When children reach secondary school, opportunities to develop personal knowledge and personal voice are replaced with the requirement to master theme writing. (p. 118-119)

McCracken (1992) then focused her attention on college writing instruction, emphasizing how, unfortunately, “instructors teach their students to write with a voice characterized by distance and disinterest” (p. 119). Sanborn (1992) also questioned the traditional, predominantly masculine approach to teaching writing. She deemed the linearity of the academic essay limiting for students: “Nothing of themselves is invested in school writing, so it becomes an impotent exercise, at best boring, at worst paralyzing. We can empower students by letting them in on the secret that thinking and writing are not monolithic, that they come in many forms” (p. 144).

Annas (1985) studied female students who were at odds with the predominantly masculine approach to writing and grouped the women into two types: One type writes fluid academic prose with ease but with very little investment or connection to her own ideas. “Another type of woman student writes regularly or occasionally in a journal, or
poetry, or fiction but does so in a diffuse and scattered way. She writes for herself, not for an audience, and though she writes about what really matters to her, she protects herself by writing almost in a private code” (p. 369). Greene (1995) accounted for why it is that some women falter when writing in the public domain: “Many of the alienated or marginalized are made to feel distrustful of their own voices, their own way of making sense, yet they are not provided alternatives that allow them to tell their stories or shape their narratives or ground new learning in what they already know” (p. 111). They are not necessarily silenced, as Ellsworth (1989) pointed out, “they are just not talking in their authentic voices” (p. 313). This type of “good girl” dutifully completes her writing but “stifles herself for the sake of her reader, puts aside the excitement of chasing a good idea, ignores her doubts”; she writes essentially in a way that does not require her to “flex her muscles, or shout, or try out her full powers” (Bolker, 1979, p. 908).

**The Expressivist Turn in Composition**

Post-structural feminism combined with a movement within composition called expressivism to change the way students were invited to engage in writing and ushered in the process-oriented model of writing that focused first on the writer’s sense of autonomy. Expressivistic rhetoric dominated the field of composition, beginning in the sixties, with its emphasis “on the ‘I,’ on defining the self so as to secure an authentic identity and voice” (Berlin, 1987, p. 153). Expressivistic rhetoric changed the field, validating the personal voice and interpretation of experience, with proponents of it “turning over a good deal of classroom authority to their students and . . . challenging traditional adherence to academic conventions and genres” (Durst, 1999, p. 125). Berlin
(1987) wrote that “[e]xpressivistic rhetoric continues to be a vital force” (p. 184) with its focus on “a dialectic between the individual and language as a means of getting in touch with the self” (p. 153).

In Berlin’s overview of the rhetorics that influenced college writing throughout the 1900s, he found the expressivist movement immensely influential and important but cautioned that if practitioners focused narrowly on the development of a personal voice it could be troubling:

This view accordingly denies the social nature of language and experience and has students respond to external conflicts through such activities as keeping a journal and writing personal essays, rather than by engaging in public discourse to affect the social and political context of their behavior. (pp. 184-85)

Berlin’s critique of expressivistic rhetoric is that it de-emphasized the social nature of learning and the importance of developing a public voice in a public domain.

Assignments focused solely on “getting in touch with the self”—as in some instances a narrow application of expressivist rhetoric lead to—promoted personal and non-confrontational experiences with writing with which most women, in particular, are already comfortable. According to Lamb (2002), students ought to write from personally meaningful positions but always with attention to or concern for audience and conflicting views. Conflict ought not to be minimalized or opposing views left unaddressed. Lamb (2003) suggested that “Although the expressionist orientation in feminist composition need not have meant necessarily that responses to conflict would be avoided, that is what has happened” (p. 156).
Jarratt (1991) emphasized that “The expressivist focus on student experiences and concerns is an important starting point for feminist pedagogy,” but careful attention must be paid to teaching students to “learn how to argue about public issues—making the turn from the personal back out to the public” (p. 122). Jarratt maintained, “We need a theory and practice more adequately attuned than expressivism is to the social complexities of our classrooms and the political exigencies of our country . . . we need a more rhetorical composition theory, one providing a model of political conflict and negotiation” (p. 112). Students need to write about what matters to them in a supportive atmosphere where what they have to say is valued, but they need not be isolated from productive confrontation entirely.

Jarratt (1991) suggested an approach to teaching composition that allows for “productive tension,” defending what might be labeled by some as an antagonistic approach on the grounds that students must be prepared to negotiate conflict in order to have their voices heard. Jarratt overviewed hooks’ liberatory and feminist stance on teaching and how it is often misconstrued: “rather than the safe and nurturing classroom, hooks recommends a class wherein ‘the primary focus is a broader spectrum of ideas and modes of inquiry, in short a dialectical context where there is serious and rigorous critical exchange’” (p. 122). hooks (1989) clarified:

Unlike the stereotypical feminist model that suggests women best come to voice in an atmosphere of safety (one in which we are all going to be kind and nurturing), I encourage students to work at coming to voice in an atmosphere where they may be afraid or see themselves at risk. The goal is to enable all
students, not just an assertive few, to feel empowered in a rigorous, critical discussion. (p. 53)

**Dialogic Argument in the Classroom**

Feminism and expressivitic rhetoric created a more hospitable climate in college composition where many students were more comfortable participating and felt that their experiences and ways of knowing were validated. Making oneself heard in college beyond the composition classroom and in the world, however, often involves defending one’s opinions; and women (as well as members of silenced groups), especially, need opportunities to do just that:

Because historically women have been channeled toward private forms and denied access to more public forms, it has seemed to me particularly important to teach women how to write political essays—by which I mean any essay that places the self in the world, is addressed to an audience, and takes a position.

(Annas, 1985, p. 369)

Annas insisted that students need to write for and about more than the self:

The kind of writing I finally want these students to be able to do brings together the personal and the political, the private and the public, into writing which is committed and powerful because it takes risk, because it speaks up clearly in their own voices and from their experience, experiments with techniques of argumentation and skillful organization, and engages, where appropriate, with the insights of other writers. (p. 370)
Graff and Birkenstein (2010) suggested that teachers encourage students to think of their writing as a conversation, wherein both “they” and “I” participate. When writers take such an approach, they are engaging in dialogue, developing “their arguments not just by looking inward but also by looking outward, listening to the other views” (p. xx). Schorn (2006) found that when students write for or from the self only or, possibly worse yet, for the teacher only (the goal on which many successful students focus), it prevents them from developing “the ability to prove a point or defend their opinions to real-world readers” (p. 338).

Defending their opinions is precisely what the self-doubting female scholars in Hammill’s study (2007) had difficulty doing. While “each woman pursued written endeavors for expressive purposes and personal fulfillment” (p. 109), they “were uncomfortable asserting and admitting their own authority in the field of composition (p. 107). They had little confidence in their abilities to argue or be subjected to criticism, yet “[a]rgument offers academics a way to converse with others in the field and, of course, means arguing and subjecting oneself to the criticism of others, whom we know are watching us with a critical eye” (p. 107). The participants in Hammill’s study typified the good girl approach to writing: They learned to succeed by churning out proficient but compliant prose, lacking a strong assertion of their ideas. It seems unlikely that the participants in Hammill’s study or any of the other good girls from the literature spent much time in college stacking their ideas up against others’ ideas and engaging in argumentative writing.
Traditional ways of teaching argumentative writing have largely been abandoned, so it is not surprising that students in recent decades have spent little time learning to argue. Fortunately, expressivistic rhetoric and feminist composition contributed to the movement away from the traditional teaching of argumentative writing. It was a shift long over-due, as Durst and Newell (1989) pointed out, since the approach to teaching argumentation in American schools had become largely ineffective:

In 19th and 20th century Britain and American schools, however, Aristotle’s *topoi* (the various ways types of evidence can be arrayed and employed in argumentation) came to be used not as active means of ideas but as static structures taught as ends in themselves. Connors (1981) argues that once the modes became static structures, useful as academic exercises rather than as communicative acts, they lost their usefulness as tools for writing instruction. (p. 377)

Most feminist compositionists seek not to revive the traditional system of teaching argument as a static and monologic structure but to teach students to persevere with their ideas in the face of conflict. Lamb (1991) envisioned that the sphere of feminist composition could be enlarged “by including in it an approach to argument, ways to proceed if one is in conflict with one’s audience” (p. 11). She insisted that “[a]rgument still has a place, although now as a means, not an end” (p. 11).

Jarratt (1991) understood that “[s]ome feminists vigorously reject argument on the ground that it is a kind of violence, an instrument specific to patriarchal discourse and unsuitable for women trying to reshape thought and experience by changing forms of
language use” (p. 105). She argued instead for a rhetoric grounded in the work of the first Sophists: “Their theory assumes that knowledge is always constructed socially and that public action is guided by informed debate among members in a democratic community” (p. 115). Schumake (2002) also called for an empowering rhetorical model and an end to “demonizing persuasion as a patriarchal tool” (p. 6). Like Lamb and Jarratt, he saw a place in feminist composition pedagogy for conflict because its purpose ultimately is the development of students’ public voices: “the idea that rhetoric can be used as a tool to persuade one’s audience should not be rejected entirely” (p. 9).

Fulkerson (1996) insisted that “despite some feminist critiques that argument is a suspect mode of patriarchal discourse, college teachers of speech and composition need to stress it, at the same time that we need to work toward a broader and less agonistic conception of argument than is frequently held” (p. 3). Fulkerson (1996) cited Hays on the matter: “Espousing thoughtful positions is especially important for women, who are prone to gloss over differences in favor of an easy consensus that avoids the risk of disagreeing with those they care about . . . never fully realizing who they are and what they believe” (p. 16). Fulkerson (1996) concluded that “failure to teach our students, of both sexes, how to write an effective argument in this sense will severely disadvantage them in their other studies, in the workplace, and in the conduct of public discourse” (p. 15).

Jarratt (2003) found that some students are willing to argue, even in the classroom, but she also posed concerns about their preparation to do it productively:
We live now in a media wasteland so far as argumentation is concerned. Talk shows (really shouting shows), talk radio (often hate-talk radio), and the incredible poverty of political discourse in which we are now awash do not provide good examples of productive conflict for students to learn from. But that is all the more reason to keep making the case for conflict, informed by feminist pedagogical principles and strong rhetorical theory. (pp. 342-343)

If students are not taught to persuade or argue in school, the ones reticent to do so may never learn and the other students more prone to argue may find less desirable models elsewhere by which to do so.

Graff and Birkenstein (2010) offer what they suggest is a desirable model from which students can learn to take part of a larger conversation. Following their “they say/I say” approach to writing, the student is encouraged to open up some difference between her position and the one she’s agreeing with, “indicating the view that the writer is responding to, marking the shift from a source’s view to the writer’s own view, offering evidence for that view” (p. xxi). By using their framework with students, Graff and Birkenstein provide them with opportunities to engage in writing that is dialectical, open, inquiring, dialogic. Students ought to aim for writing that shows evidence of integrating others’ knowledge with their own, possibly challenging authorities and/or interrogating their own previously held views.

Lamb (1991) also offered a specific strategy for teaching argumentation, specifically a “feminist alternative to monologic argument” (p. 21). The goals of her rhetoric are to see knowledge as collaborative and cooperative and argument as a back-
and-forth process rather than a monologue. She suggested adapting the oral strategies of negotiation and mediation to writing in order to avoid monologic argument: “When we practice and teach monologic argument as an end, we are teaching students that conflict can be removed by an effort that is fundamentally one-sided. . . . Negotiation and mediation are cooperative approaches to resolving conflicts” (p. 18). She considered writer/reader relationships in the context of a feminist view of power in the sense that power is not something that one possesses and exercises on others but is “something which can energize, enabling competence and thus reducing hierarchy” (p. 15).

Lamb (2002) contended that if we were to recognize that argument, like all knowledge, is socially-constructed, our ways of working with argumentation in the classroom would change: “We would look at the process of argumentation as problem solving rather than contest; we would require students to seek out and understand perspectives other than their own; we would encourage students to acknowledge the place of emotions and personal experience in decision making” (p. 159). Encouraging students to entertain perspectives other than their own but also to include their personal experience is grounded in Belenky et al.’s (1986) constructed ways of knowing. There is no need to continue the ban on argumentation or come up with something new. Instead, a re-envisioning of it from a post-structural feminist perspective provides a reinvigorated approach. Lamb (2002) maintained there “really are alternatives to argument as we have taught and practiced it” (p. 162). She advocated for approaches that prompt students to engage with ideas and each other and eventually take a position on an issue they care
about and write a compelling, confident response—with attention paid to and respect for others who disagree.

McCracken’s (1992) emphasis on creating a rigorous but more hospitable classroom climate drew on Kenneth Burke’s well-known metaphor that likened the process of becoming educated to the ways one goes about joining a conversation—a contentious conversation that has been going on for some time, dominated largely by those who have extensive knowledge on the topic at hand. In Burke’s scenario, someone new inevitably arrives. S/he is permitted entry; and after listening for some time, s/he ventures into the conversation. However, the experiences most women have in their education, McCracken noted, fall short of Burke’s vision. Women remain hesitant and lack the support needed to venture into the conversation. Lamb (2002) pointed out that the new arrival in Burke’s scenario “takes it for granted that he is invited and can enter the parlor; he also seems to have no doubts about being able to speak, using the proper forms, and being listened to once he speaks” (p. 155). Women and other silenced students often lack the confidence and experiences necessary to enter in boldly and participate as fully-fledged members of the conversation. But writing can be the training ground for such participation, according to Graff and Birkenstein (2010), in that it provides students opportunities to enter, if only on the page, “the conversation with others” (p. xvi).

Writing can be the means by which students learn to enter the conversation. In their school writing, students can experiment with responding to the views of others and asserting their ideas as well as writing in a private, personally gratifying way.
Undeniably, writing ought to be one means by which students further develop an understandings of self; but it must also, as many feminists have exhorted, help prepare students for the public realm. Delpit (1988) insisted that it is crucial that we not only recognize “the need to help students to establish their own voices, but to coach those voices to produce notes that will be heard clearly in the larger society” (p. 296). Women and minority students especially may not otherwise gain the experience and confidence necessary to make themselves heard in conversations within and beyond the classroom. Payne (1994) asked, “Should I ask the women to learn a new discourse that for many is threatening?” (p. 108). Certainly, learning the new discourse in school under the tutelage of a supportive teacher is less threatening than attempting to chart one’s own course in a contentious public domain.

Inviting students into a conversation of ideas within academia encourages them “to become a certain type of person: a critical, intellectual thinker who, instead of sitting passively on the sidelines, can participate in the debates and conversations in [their] world in an active and empowered way” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 13). The study reported in this dissertation is a close examination of the extent to which five college women were given and took on opportunities to enter a conversation and practice the kind of active and empowered engagement with ideas promoted by feminist pedagogy.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out if the writing of five high-achieving college women showed evidence that they were “listening to others while simultaneously speaking with and listening to the self” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 145). The central research questions were posed: In the students’ portfolios of their written work from college, where and how much evidence is there of the writers integrating others’ ideas with their own and supporting personally meaningful positions. And, what types of assignments prompted the writers to engage in that process?

Rationale for the Research Paradigm

My purpose as a researcher was to find out to what extent the college women in my study had written papers that did more than reflect on personal experience in isolation from a larger conversation or display a distanced mastery of a subject matter, “in the sense of being oriented away from the self—the knower—and toward the object the knower seeks to analyze or understand” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 123). In order to study this problem, I needed access to trustworthy informants, authors (the college writers), and documents (their college writing) as well as a clear understanding of the immediate and larger context of production (the rhetorical situation). Since I was attending to the written works of women, with a particular focus on their confidence and willingness to assert themselves with their words, a feminist, qualitative research framework best suited this study. As Bogdan and Biklen (2003) pointed out, it is not surprising that “in the last
decade or so the expression ‘giving voice’ has come to be associated with qualitative research” (p. 201). I selected an approach to my research that best suited my purpose: a qualitative approach, specifically a type of inquiry that is narrative, feminist, participatory, and post-structural—what Lather (1992) called a “more humble scholarship capable of helping us to tell better stories about a world marked by the elusiveness with which it greets our efforts to know it” (p. 95). Although Lather referred to this sort of research as “humble,” she maintained that its methods are “interactive, contextualized, humanly compelling” (p. 91).

According to Lather (1992), “feminist researchers see gender as a basic organizing principle that profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete conditions of our lives” (p. 91). I devoted attention to the words, both written and spoken, of the co-participants in the study: I studied the papers they wrote while in college and I included “the voice of the participants being studied” from interviews conducted over two years (Hatch, 2002, p. 9). Patton (1990) pointed out that “qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 278). I therefore involved the co-participants in this study by interviewing them about their perspectives on writing. In doing so, I asked them about their writing process and products. Through interviewing, I encouraged them to reflect on the papers they had written in college that they found to be significant and the approaches they took in them. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) write that “If you want to understand the way people think about their world and how those definitions are formed you need to get close to them, to hear them talk” (p. 31).
To prepare for the interviews, I developed what Hatch (2002) called “guiding questions” (p. 101). Prior to the interviews, I looked over the students’ portfolios of papers and outlined a list of open-ended questions to ask each participant (see Appendix A). These questions were designed to “get informants talking about their experiences and understandings” (p. 102). Marshall and Rossman (1989) explained that interviews in qualitative studies are often “more like conversations than formal, structured interviews. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures responses” (p. 82).

Since “the basic thrust of qualitative interviewing is to minimize the imposition of predetermined responses when gathering data” (Patton, 1990, p. 295), using open-ended, neutral questions served to focus our conversation but allowed the respondents to answer in their own way (Yin, 2009). The interviews were what Hatch (2002) described as “semi-structured,” which allowed me to be open to “following the leads of the informants and probing into areas that [arose] during interview interaction” (p. 94). I asked each participant how frequently she participated verbally in class discussions (asking her to describe her behavior) and I inquired as to which types of papers she had written that she felt benefited her most, but most of my questions were aimed at eliciting an understanding of her writing/thinking process and encouraging her to reflect on her writing experiences in whatever way she chose.

My research co-participants were the experts on how to write successful college papers and their own writing process obviously, so I adopted the stance of novice: “The
actual practices of social researchers, even when using questionnaires or interviews, is more akin to that of operating as an apprentice to an instructor” (Hughes & Sharrock, 1998, p. 157). As Hatch (2002) explained, “the researchers’ stance in relation to informants should be one of students who hope to learn from their informant teachers” (p. 107). It was with deep respect and a genuine admiration for the women participating in this study that I proceeded with the interviews.

In addition to interviewing, I asked the participants to submit to me the papers they wrote while in college. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “the human-as-instrument is inclined toward methods that are extensions of normal human activities: looking, listening, speaking, reading, and the like. We believe that the human will tend, therefore, toward interviewing, observing, mining available documents and records” (p. 199). I had available to me the most complete and detailed record of their experiences as writers in college: their finished written products from most of their courses taken from their sophomore years through to graduation. I decided to read carefully and “mine” the available documents that would best inform the study—the papers they had written.

When analyzing the students’ papers they wrote while in college, I relied on the techniques of discourse analysis, what Gee (2005) called “the analysis of language as it is used to enact activities, perspectives, and identities” (p. 5). I looked closely at how they were writing and demonstrating through their words that they were high-achieving college women writers. I engaged in a close reading of their written texts, but my intent was to do more eventually than provide just a linguistic description of their work:
We are not interested in simply describing data so that we can admire the intricacy of language, though this is, indeed, admirable. Rather, we are interested, beyond description, in two things: illuminating and gaining evidence for our theory of the domain, a theory that helps to explain how and why language works the way it does when it is put into action; and contributing, in terms of understanding and intervention, to important issues and problems in some “applied” area (e.g. education) that interests and motivates the researcher. (Gee, 2005, p. 8).

Although there was much to admire in the participants’ portfolios of writing in terms of their facility with language, I focused on what they were accomplishing with their words and the choices they made in their topic selection, approach to an assignment, and willingness to assert their ideas with conviction.

After examining the papers written by the co-participants in the study, I requested the assignment sheets from the professors who required the particularly challenging papers. I was interested in knowing what types of assignments prompted students to integrate their ideas with others’ ideas and to assert their views. I conducted brief “informal interviews” or what Hatch (2002) called “unstructured conversations” (p. 92) with several of the professors who had assigned the more interesting and ambitious papers, asking about the specifics of the assignments and the purposes they felt they served. I met with them in their offices and, with their permission, used a laptop to take notes. I asked them about the specifics of the assignments, the purposes they felt the
assignments served, and the response they had regarding a particular participants’ approach to a paper written for their course.

**Human Subjects Review**

Before collecting data, applications to use human research participants were submitted and approved by Kent State University’s Institutional Review Board (Appendixes B and C). A consent form (Appendix D) was given to each participant, once she was chosen, and I emphasized her rights as a participant and ensured her of the anonymity of participants. At no point were minors used in the study or participants compensated for their involvement. I also provided consent forms to the professors with whom I conversed (Appendix E).

**Participants**

I invited five female students, whom I came to know well when they were my students, to participate in my study. In narrative inquiry, there is no fast track to intimacy; and as Connelly and Clandinin (1991) pointed out, “collaborative research requires a close relationship akin to friendship” (p. 123). As their instructor in a writing course during either their freshman or sophomore years, I had the opportunity to have individual conversations with each of my five participants about their writing, and I knew that each one was a highly-proficient and engaged writer. I knew each participant for three or four years, and we maintained our relationship during their undergraduate experience. The sort of relationship I established with each of them felt from the very beginning much like a collaborative research venture as we sought to learn from each
other. Such a relationship, according to Connelly and Clandinin (1991), soothes the difficulty of negotiating entry into the field situation.

Each of the women in this study graduated with honors (with a GPA of 3.5 or higher) from the same co-educational Christian liberal-arts university in May 2009. Each identified herself as a committed Christian from a two-parent, traditional Christian family. The participants were white, average age for undergraduates, and, except for one who married after her sophomore year, single. The fact that they identified themselves as Christians was significant since they were at an institution that requires faculty to sign a statement of the Christian faith. The students’ professed faith indicated that they were at ease in an environment that stresses faith-learning integration. There wasn’t a clashing of faith traditions and worldviews, which could be for some students at this institution a reason to silence their views. Since the co-participants in the study were not at odds, fundamentally, with their professors’ religious beliefs, that was not likely to be a significant factor for them when determining how assertive to be with their ideas.

When the research co-participants are referenced in this study as high-achieving or successful as writers, it means that they were consistently earning high marks and were being rewarded for the rhetorical approaches they took. Each one was a skilled writer who generally felt confident completing the written work assigned to her while in college. But, each had mentioned to me a tension she felt regarding her education, and all of the participants except for the middle-childhood education major said they were reticent to participate in classroom discussions. These women reminded me of myself and the other “good girls” in the literature throughout the decades that focused on female
students and the problems or dissatisfaction they often had with their education, but they differed in one significant way: they reported that they were relatively pleased with the writing they did while in college and said that they enjoyed the process of and sense of accomplishment in completing papers.

My sample was a relatively small one, chosen purposefully. I wanted to focus on these women, five members of a new generation of “good girls,” and study them and their written portfolios in depth: “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). I chose these five women to participate because they were members of the Class of 2009 who were excellent writers and with whom I had a meaningful relationship. Also, these five students majored in different areas, which allowed me to examine writing assigned by professors from a variety of disciplines.

Five participants was a manageable number for interviewing and for analyzing the extensive portfolios of their writing done during college: “The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size” (Patton, 1990, p. 185). Table 1 provides a brief overview of the five participants, their majors, schools that house their major, GPA, age at graduation, frequency of contributions to class discussions, and number of papers and pages in their portfolios.
Table 1: Overview of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Cumulative GPA</th>
<th>Age at Grad</th>
<th>Participation in Class Discussions</th>
<th>Number of Papers in Portfolio</th>
<th>Number of Pages in Portfolio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Communication Arts [Minors: Marketing and Writing]</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>Business &amp; Accounting [double major]</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>Middle Childhood Education</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>frequently</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I chose to focus only on women so that I could determine if there were common approaches to writing or shared tension regarding their writing experiences. Martin (2000) traced the history of feminist scholarship as it aligned with education research and weighed in on the essentialist debate:

I sympathized from the start with those researchers and theorists who were telling each other to avoid talking of “womanhood” or “woman as such.” But the critics also intimated that one who speaks of “gender identity” is committed to essentialism. And before long, they were saying that women and gender are themselves essentialist concepts or categories, and that reproduction and mothering are too. . . . These categories are not more essentialist than chair, table, justice, or democracy. . . . It would also be self-defeating for in the name of
consistency we would have to ban the use of just about every general term. (pp. 15-16)

This research study was not designed with the intent to make generalizations about a whole population based on a small sample but to find out whether or not the five women in this study shared similar experiences as writers while in college and if so what those might be:

The self-imposed ban on generalizations rests on the assumption that if women are different in some respects, they are different in all. Of course black and white women, middle-class and working-women, Irish and Arab women are different. But just as no two individuals are like in every respect, no two are different in every respect. The question of whether all women have one or more things in common cannot be answered in advance of investigation. (Martin, 2000, pp. 17-18)

I share Martin’s insistence that “women in higher education’s classrooms are at risk, and that it is my obligation as a feminist scholar concerned with education to do what I can to alleviate their plight” (p. 11). In order to begin to work toward alleviating what Martin felt to be problematic—the silencing of women in higher education—I needed to find out what, if any, difficulties the women writers in my study had in common and what types of opportunities for dialogic exchange they were having.

**Collection of Data**

My initial invitation to my former students to become co-participants in this study occurred toward the end of their junior year of college. I told the participants that I was
interested in studying the writing they had been asked to do as college students, and I asked each participant to bring to my office her graded papers or if she did not have those to email me attachments of as many of her formal papers (3 typed pages or more) that she would be willing to share. Several of the participants mentioned that they did not write very many papers during their first year of college or that they could no longer find them as saved documents, so I encouraged all the participants to send me all the papers from their sophomore and junior years. A year later I collected the papers they had written during their senior years. Each student’s portfolios contained at least 15 papers and totaled a minimum of 91 typed pages.

Because I was also investigating the students’ writing process (the rhetorical choices they made and why) as well as how they felt about the writing they had done, I conducted interviews with the participants using an audiocassette recorder at the end of their junior year and once again at the end of their senior year, and I transcribed each of those interviews within two weeks of when they were conducted. Each interview lasted a minimum of 30 minutes, and they were formal in the sense that they occurred at a set time and in my office. I also interviewed the faculty members who assigned several of the most challenging papers and collected the assignment sheets they had provided their students.

**Data Analysis**

I began my analysis with a willingness to remain open to whatever the data in the form of the students’ written papers revealed to me and hear whatever they had to say about their writing and their processes. I approached it as a “nonlinear, recursive
(iterative) process in which data collection, data analysis, and interpretation occur[ed] throughout the study and influence[d] each other” (Willis, 2007 p. 202). For instance, I reviewed the participants’ papers they submitted to me before I interviewed them. When I noticed papers that exhibited what Polanyi (1958) described as “the passionate participation of the knower in the act of knowing” (p. viii), I made a note to have a conversation with the writers about those particular papers, and I developed the following questions: “Tell me about the paper you wrote for [course title] called [paper title] on [topic]. How did you decide to write about that topic? Did you enjoy the process of writing that paper? Was it challenging? Are you proud of it?” The papers served as a type of data that Hatch (2002) explained can “invite and stimulate participant reflection and interpretation” (p. 120).

When working with the transcripts of the interviews during which the college women and I conversed about the written pieces in their portfolio, I read through the first set of interviews conducted after their junior years and recorded preliminary impressions of the data. I then read through the transcripts again, writing my reflections in the margins as I read. I followed the same process after transcribing the interviews conducted at the end of their senior years. My process of analyzing the transcripts involved 1.) reviewing the transcripts carefully; 2.) having discussions with two peer debriefers with experience teaching college writing; and 3.) recording my thoughts and insights in a research journal.

Since this research study was designed in part to determine how often the five women students were simply “playing the game” and proving themselves with their
written words to be smart, respectful, and dutiful students, I read through their portfolios of papers looking for specific indicators like hedgers (“it seems to me” or “this is just my opinion”), excessive politeness, or deferential phrasing that signaled the writer’s unwillingness to assert her views strongly. Overall, though, the first time I read each text holistically, keeping in mind the rhetorical situation: the discourse was a piece of college writing written for an instructor, typically treated as the expert. I resisted focusing too closely on linguistic structures. According to Gee (2004), “what is at stake is how various grammatical features ‘hang together,’ not any one feature in and of itself” (p. 37). Taking all of the features of a text into account and examining how they “hang together,” I treated each paper as evidence of a who, “a socially situated identity,” and a what, “a socially-situated activity that the utterance helps to constitute” (Gee, 2005, p. 13). To get an overall picture of the socially situated student her writing proved her to be, I examined the topic chosen by the writer in each paper, the stance she adopted, and the rhetorical strategies she employed.

After the interviews were completed at the end of their senior years and the participants had submitted the last of their papers, I returned to the portfolios and created an overview of its contents: the number of papers and total pages in each portfolio, the types of papers, the courses for which the papers were written, the length of each paper, and whether or not outside sources were used (see Appendix E for an example). I then worked through the portfolios again, paying particular attention to those papers in which it was evident that the student was taking a risk with her topic and/or her stance and looking for what Graff and Birkenstein (2010) called the “they say/I say” framework. I
identified each paper wherein the writer was “indicating the view that [she was] responding to, marking the shift from a source’s view to [her] own view, offering evidence for that view” (p. xvi). Graff and Birkenstein insisted that “the ‘they say/I say’ pattern cuts across different disciplines and genres of writing . . . there is no major or discipline that does not require writers to frame their own claims as a response to what others before them have said” (p. xx). When writers take such an approach it means that they are striving to engage in dialogue, to “develop their arguments not just by looking inward but also by looking outward, listening carefully to other views” (p. xx). I focused my analysis then on those papers in which a “they say/I say” structure was evident. I analyzed the degree to which and ways in which the student used the ideas of others as a springboard for her own ideas (see Appendix F). I also identified the amount of page space devoted in each argumentative paper to her own claims—the “I say”—and compared that with the amount of page space she devoted to the material and/or the ideas of others.

Trustworthiness and Quality of the Study

As Patton (1990) was clear to point out, “there is a part of qualitative analysis that is highly creative . . . But there is also a technical side to analysis that is analytically rigorous, mentally replicable, and explicitly systematic” (p. 462). One method I chose to strengthen this qualitative study was the use of data triangulation: “Knowing a single landmark only locates you somewhere along a line in direction from the landmark, whereas with two landmarks you can take bearings in two directions and locate yourself at their intersection” (Patton, 1990, p. 187). I checked the consistency between what the
students said in the interviews about their writing with their writing itself; their papers constituted a type of data that was “useful to triangulation processes because their nonreactive nature makes them one step removed from participants’ intervening interpretations” (Hatch, 2002, p. 119). I also sought to validate the information obtained in the interviews about the assignments students did by consulting many of the actual assignment sheets and in some cases the professors’ comments about the assignments.

Another method selected to strengthen this study was member checking. Since, according to Gee (2005), “a discourse analysis argues that certain data support a given theme or point (hypothesis)” (p. 114), it is especially important if feasible, and in this case it was, to have the analysis of the discourse or in this case my analysis of the papers written checked by the writers of those papers: “Evaluators can learn a great deal about the accuracy, fairness, and validity of their data analysis by having the people described in that data analysis react to what is described” (Patton, 1990, p. 468). I asked the research co-participants to read over and comment on my analysis of their written works. Each participant read the section of chapter IV that includes her background information, material from the interviews, a discussion of her experiences with writing, and a description and analysis of the contents of her portfolio. After doing so, each participant emailed me her comments and approval of the accuracy with which the data had been reported.

Patton (1990) insisted, “the credibility of qualitative inquiry is especially dependent on the credibility of the researcher because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and the center of the analytic process” (Patton, 1990, p. 461). From the
beginning of this study, I remained committed to resisting “narrative smoothing” (p. 142) or what Connelly and Clandinin (1991) describe as “the Hollywood plot, the plot where everything works out well in the end” (p. 142). In a long process of dissertation researching and writing, I relied on self-checking and I returned “to the data over and over again to see if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations make sense” (Patton, 1990, p. 477). My training in discourse analysis and linguistics, sixteen years teaching college writing, ten years of experience as director of composition, and my commitment to qualitative teacher research helped to contribute, I believe, to what Patton (1990) called the intangibles that go above and beyond the requirements for rigorous inquiry: “creativity, intellectual rigor, perseverance, insight” (p. 477).

My research co-participants were students on a small campus whom I came to know well over the course of three or four years. I came to care about them deeply and wanted to know as much of their stories as I could. While I taught them all in at least one English course, I believed like Slattery (2002) that it was best to choose to interview women I knew and cared about: “my own involvement could lead to more humane and fruitful interviews: Since I knew the participants well, they felt comfortable talking to me about their writing and could therefore more easily provide the rich and detailed types of responses that I hoped to receive” (p. 363). Also, I no longer had four of the participants as students in my courses once their interviews began at the end of their junior years, so their desire to please me with their responses was potentially less of a factor than it otherwise might have been. The two participants I did teach during their senior years were the two with whom I felt that the most trust and openness had been established; and
although I was their professor, when we had opportunities to talk one-on-one, they had always been willing to disagree with me or to speak openly with me about any subject. They were two of the most diligent and thoughtful students I have ever taught, and they visited my office often to talk gregariously about their lives and their ideas. Yet, they were usually silent in my classes and in their other courses as well. Their written portfolios provided some of the richest data in that they wrote a great deal and on occasion with a boldness and confidence they rarely, if ever, displayed in the classroom setting.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested that the end result of qualitative research take the form of a translation: “This way of understanding suggests that what researchers do is to take what they have seen and heard and write it down on paper so that it makes as much sense to the reader as it did to the researcher” (p. 193). The evidence I present includes direct quotations from transcripts of the interviews with the five college women writers in my study as well as numerous excerpts from their written work. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) advised writing up the detailed summaries of what was heard and read:

The evidence makes the generalizations take hold in the reader’s mind. The qualitative researcher, in effect, says to the reader, “Here is what I found and here are the details to support that view.” . . . Your writing should clearly illustrate that your generalizations (actually summaries of what you saw) are grounded in what you saw (the details that, taken together, add up to the generalizations). (p. 193)

Ultimately, my goal was to convey to the reader what the students with whom I collaborated on this project experienced as a result of the writing curriculum at one
university. Since I, not the students, provided the description, I realized the best I could aim for was what Clifford (1986) called “partial truths” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 193) in that they were shaped by the evidence and language I chose to use. But through the use of careful and thorough “techniques for enhancing the validity and credibility of analysis” (Patton, 1990, p. 461), I present in the next chapter the partial but fair account of five women’s experiences as writers in college.
CHAPTER IV

DATA

In this chapter, I start with a description and analysis of the writing done by Caroline, the Communication Arts major, followed by Emily, the English major. I provide extended discussions and more frequent and lengthier excerpts of Caroline’s papers and to some degree Emily’s to serve as a contrast to the others. The papers assigned to Caroline and Emily and the ways they approached the assignments were the most varied and ambitious in the sense that the assignments gave them the opportunities—and often they seized them—to experiment with integrating others’ ideas with their own. Yet, both participants on occasion stumbled and were most challenged by papers that required a dialectical interchange or interaction.

I present each participant’s experiences in three parts. Part one provides background information on each participant and addresses the first three of six research questions designed to guide this study: 1.) How much did the research co-participants write while in college? 2.) In what types of writing did they engage? 3.) Which papers did they feel benefited them the most and why? In part one for each participant, I offer an overview of the participant’s experiences with writing while in college, briefly describe the contents of her portfolio, and include excerpts from the interviews that reveal her views on writing in general.

In part two of the discussion of each participant, I focus on how many and which types of papers the participants tended to complete without having to proceed in a dialectical fashion. Generally in these papers, they reflected on their experiences separate
from a larger conversation or presented course material and others’ views. To borrow from Henderson and Kesson’s (2004) “3S Understanding,” which refers to the integration of self, social, and subject matter learning, I refer to these papers as 1S writing because they draw primarily on one aspect of the triumvirate. The 1S also stands for writing that is “one-sided.” In these types of papers very little effort is made to bring in differing voices or situate the writing within a larger conversation; the writer refrains from putting in her oar, testing out the waters. In papers such as these the writer tends to focus on the personal or informative, but in neither case does the writer bring them together. I mention and discuss briefly these types of papers in each participant’s portfolio.

In part three of the discussion of each participant and her writing, I address the central research questions of this study: 4.) Where is there evidence in the portfolios of their written work that the participants learned how to form and support meaningful positions in the context of a larger conversation? 5.) What types of assignments prompted the writers to engage in dialogic writing and support claims of their own? McCracken (2008) referred to dialogic writing as writing that “talks back” (Bruce et al., 2008, p. 5). In order to identify writing that integrates self, social, and subject matter understanding, I looked for a “they say/I say” move made by the writer (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010). I offer selected passages as well as analyses of those passages from the papers she wrote that challenged her to integrate both others’ ideas and her own assertive claim. In some instances, I also describe the assignment as it was given to her by the instructor and provide information gleamed from an interview with the instructor.
regarding the goals of the assignment and the instructor’s thoughts on how the writer benefited from taking the approach to the assignment that she did.

I selected those papers included in part three based on the interviews with the participants and my reading of all the works in her portfolio because they exhibited what Henderson and Kesson (2004) called a 3S understanding, what Polanyi (1958) described as “the passionate participation of the knower in the act of knowing” (p. viii), and what Belenky et al. (1986) coined “constructed knowing.” The writer’s engagement with others’ ideas and connection to her own is the essence of academic writing; more importantly, the integration of multiple voices on an issue is an essential aspect of public discourse beyond academe:

The underlying structure of effective academic writing—and of responsible public discourse—resides not just in stating our own ideas, but in listening closely to the others around us, summarizing their views in a way that they will recognize, and responding with our own ideas in kind. (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 3)

When writers show evidence that they have taken such an approach, it means that they are learning by “looking inward but also by looking outward, listening carefully to other views” (p. xx). I focused my analysis on those papers in which a looking both inward and outward was evident. I analyzed the degree to and ways in which the student succeeded in integrating and using, or was starting but could have done more to use, the ideas of others as a springboard for her ideas.
Caroline

Participant Background and Overview of Her Portfolio

Caroline majored in communication arts with minors in marketing and English. Her career goal was to use her education and interpersonal skills either in higher education and student development or with a nonprofit organization. Toward completing the general education requirements, Caroline transferred in a 3-credit hour course in philosophy and one in psychology from a summer internship spent at Focus on the Family Institute in Colorado that. Caroline’s degree was conferred upon her in May 2009; she graduated magna cum laude with her communication major, and she completed both her minors.

For this study, Caroline submitted 28 papers written during her sophomore year through her senior year, totaling 155 double-spaced, typed pages. Included in her portfolio is a variety of types of assignments: research papers, personal reflections, exploratory essays, argumentative essays, literary précis and literary analysis papers, cultural critiques, a feature news story, a statistical study, and a spiritual autobiography. The assignments were given in courses from various disciplines—including communication arts, English, history, political science, physical education, theology, and math.

Although she was a communication arts major who talked with confidence and ease outside of the classroom, in the classroom setting Caroline often remained silent. In an interview, she mentioned that she often found classroom conversations to be “dominated by men” and “intimidating” to enter. She reported, though, that she enjoyed
the writing she did for her classes: “I enjoy writing down what I think. I feel smarter when I write.” When I asked her what it is she liked about writing papers since many students dread them, she offered a possible explanation: “Class discussions are so dominated by men. It’s the only forum we have, maybe.”

When asked if there were any types of assignments that she didn’t enjoy or were difficult for her, she mentioned teacher-directed research papers: “When you’re told: ‘This is your topic’ and it’s very structured. When it’s about a particular subject, I just feel very boxed in, like I need to write exactly what they think about that topic. So . . . research papers. I don’t like those, unless I get to pick my own topic.”

**Caroline’s One-Sided Writing**

There are numerous papers in Caroline’s portfolio of the sort she dislikes—traditional research or explanatory papers in which she had to write what someone else thought about a topic. It is not surprising that she wrote many of these types of papers; Hairston (2005) found explanatory writing to be typical of college writing with its emphasis on the writer conveying that she found and can reiterate material already out there. Caroline was dispassionate about the sort of writing that simply showed her mastery of the subject matter or restated others’ views.

Of the 29 papers Caroline submitted, 13 of them are dominated primarily by writing that is about *one* of the following only: self, subject matter, or others’ ideas. Caroline was comfortable with and easily able to write from and about the self; but if that is all that was required of her in an assignment, it was considered, for the purposes of this study, one-sided writing. Regardless of whether she focused on self, subject matter, or
others’ ideas, she carried off one-sided writing successfully (as evidenced in Appendix G).

For numerous papers in her literature and other courses, Caroline wrote typical, straightforward, standard summaries of the material she had been required to read. In several papers, she described personal experiences or information. For a history course, Caroline chose to write about her grandfather’s experience living in Indonesia at the start of World War II. In all likelihood, Caroline anticipated that her compelling story combined with her mastery of the conventions of the English language would go over well with her history professor, which it did. She earned 74/75 points on the assignment. While it was an interesting and personally meaningful approach, it did not present much of a challenge to her—as a thinker and writer. There was no evidence in it that she engaged in a dialogue—a back and forth of ideas—or advanced a conversation or her own way of thinking. Similarly, for a short paper written as a requirement of her physical education course, Caroline wrote a personal reflection in which she told of the fear she overcame when rock climbing and the confidence it gave her to take risks in all areas of her life. And in a short paper for a course called Autobiography and Memoir, she wrote a personal reflection on the trials and tribulations of climbing Mt. Elbert, the tallest mountain in Colorado. This type of personal, expressive writing was not difficult for her. She did not have to assert any ideas or take a position on an issue of any sort.

None of the thirteen 1S papers offered Caroline much in the way of a challenge. She was a successful college writer who could draw on her command of the conventions of standard written English and her facility with language to write papers in which she
summarized material or reflected on her experiences with very little difficulty. Much of writing in these papers is rather innocuous and bland. Compared to the others in her portfolio, there is very little writing in any of these types of papers that is remarkable or that demonstrated the constructed writing and thinking of which she is capable.

While on occasion in her writing Caroline chose to “play it safe and avoid controversy” and make “statements that nobody can possibly disagree with” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 7), there is evidence in Caroline’s portfolio that she was willing to take risks, enter conversations, particularly about issues that mattered to her, respond to others’ views, and challenge standard ways of thinking. According to Graff and Birkenstein (2010), “You need to enter a conversation, using what others say (or might say) as a launching pad or sounding board for your own ideas” (p. 3). Caroline not only entered a conversation and used it as a sounding board for her own ideas in the following “they say/I say” papers; she was often free to choose the topics of and approach to those conversations, which ended up focused on the most meaningful and crucial issues she was facing in her life.

Caroline’s “They Say/I Say” Writing

Caroline favored exploratory types of writing: “Exploratory writing tends to be about ideas” (Hairston, 2005, p. 81). Caroline was full of ideas; and when challenged by the assignment to do so, she eagerly wrote about them in conversation with authors who provoked a reply. In one of the paper assignments written for me in an upper-division English course, Caroline was asked to respond to the ideas put forth by one of the writers we had been studying. She chose to respond to Adrienne Rich’s “Taking Women
Students Seriously.” Caroline mentioned Rich’s well-known ideas, then positioned two views in her first paragraph—a communication theory and a student comment made in class about how very different things are for women now—and then immediately responded with an “I say” structure: “Times have changed and women have more freedoms and high profile positions in the world, but this reform is far from finished. In fact, unlike the student in class, most women are still struggling to be heard, to gain respect, or to feel like they have accomplished something.”

Caroline questioned the gender status quo as she understood it throughout history, referring to the women like many suffragettes, for instance, whose stories “have been left out of most history books—I found them in the back corner of a Michigan museum exhibit.” She also addressed the gender norms she recognized in her daily life:

Women are outnumbered in my politics class, and during class lectures, there is not a single female voice adding her opinion to the discussion. . . . Perhaps it is because politics often turn into a conflict, and as women, we have been socialized to be the peacemakers. Therefore, participation in conflict is foreign territory for women, and so they remain mute.

Although Caroline was insistent on examining why it might be that women are often silent on topics like politics, she was careful not to offend. She posited a reason for the silence among the women in the politics course and marked it with a “perhaps.” She did not explore how the instructor might have encouraged the women in the class to speak or what role she might have taken to encourage them to do so.
Caroline listened closely to Rich, agreeing with her ideas, but presented and disagreed with a classmate’s claim, and challenged traditional ways of thinking about women by responding with her own ideas. Graff and Birkenstein (2010) argued that it is important for students to go beyond merely summarizing and connecting to the ideas of others: In academics, students ought to use writing “to disagree with others, to challenge standard ways of thinking, and thus to stir up controversy” (p. 8).

In her theology course, Caroline argued, albeit hesitantly, about a matter of great debate that revealed she wrote with an impassioned tone on matters of importance to her. In her paper, “Looking at Abortion through a Different Lens,” she summarized a lecture on Christian views of abortion given at the annual conference for southern Baptist ministers. She demonstrated her understanding of the lecture, expressed agreement with the speaker’s explanation of the misconceptions Christians have about the abortion debate, but she disagreed with his overall premise. Caroline suggested that Christians can’t judge and determine the reproductive rights of others. She spent a significant amount of the paper (four pages) summarizing the source; then on page four she stated that she found it difficult to accept the author’s position that we could legislate what a woman does with her body:

I find it difficult to accept Hauerwas’ statement that “we do not believe that we have a right to our bodies because when we are baptized we become members of one another.” Understanding that as believers our bodies house the Spirit of God, I still find it difficult to believe that we can allow other Christians to share in such
decisions as abortion. . . I cannot imagine that telling someone outright what they should do with their body is the proper Christian response.

There is a very strong pro-life contingent on campus and it is likely that because of the conservative views in which the majority of her peers are entrenched, Caroline chose to deflect attention from her claim by quickly going back to what she agreed with in the authors’ argument and then brought Jesus—an authority her peers and professor respect—into the conversation: “I appreciate [the author’s] emphasis on opening up homes to unwed mothers. It is reminiscent of when Jesus protects the woman about to be stoned due to her adultery. Jesus does not condemn her, nor should we condemn those who may have made a decision to abort.” She implored her audience to think on Jesus’ actions, then she made her assertion: “I believe the proper Christian response in this example would be to provide a listening ear and some type of hope for the grieving mother. . . . This is not an issue of when life began, rather it is about the abundant, joy-filled life that is supposed to radiate within the church.” This is a sophisticated paper written by a student in a theology course at a predominantly conservative evangelical university. Making use of the “they say/I say” structure, Caroline became a part of a very controversial conversation.

In another “they say/I say” paper written for me in a course called Introduction to Linguistics, in which I had Caroline during her senior year, she wrote a paper on stereotypical ways of naming children, a topic about which she felt strongly, but she stopped short of making bold assertions, although the assignment provided her with the opportunity to do so. She spent several pages citing sources and explaining common
names for females throughout time that generally begin with a weak initial syllable and
dead with the diminutive form. She argued that “Perhaps there are names that feed easily
into the idea of women as small, attractive, or less powerful and thus should be
reconsidered in the naming process.”

Caroline brought in her personal experience at the end of the paper by examining
her name as well as the names of her three sisters and how they “all end in the schwa
sound” and lend themselves easily to “taking a diminutive form with an ending [i] sound
as a nickname.” She contrasted that with her brother’s name: “Of course this
stereotyping is not as prevalent for male children. My brother’s name ‘Nicholas’ and his
nickname of ‘Nick’ both sound strong and he will never be viewed as inferior due to the
powerful sounds his name encompasses.” She handled this material within one
paragraph only though and at the end of her lengthy paper.

For a paper Caroline was required to write for Women Writers in which she
engaged in a “they say/I say” exchange, the professor had asked students to “introduce
the issue you wish to explore, write a focused thesis, organize the paper in a way that’s
fitting for the argument you want to make, and develop support for your thesis.”
Caroline chose to contrast Browning’s young female character Aurora, who struggled to
be the ideal woman, with Virginia Woolf, who succeeded in subverting the traditional
feminine ideal. Caroline explained that Woolf named the Victorian idealized version of
a woman the “Angel in the House” after a once popular poem. In the beginning lines of
the paper, Caroline suggested the Angel still lingers among us: “There is a woman who
has haunted all women since the days of Eve. She encompasses everything that is
pleasant and calm. Her smiles bring warmth and her actions bring comfort. She is without equal, though women strive to be like her.” Caroline argued that Woolf and other “women began to challenge the norm, creating tension and conflict in all social circles.” Caroline wrote, “Happy was the day when women realized they had the power to leave the cage and fly away.”

Caroline failed, however, to carefully consider the ramifications for women, like Browning’s Aurora, who defied the norm and the consequences of such radical behavior: “Virginia Woolf was right to kill the Angel, because her writing would not have been as meaningful otherwise. . . . By leaving the birdcage, Aurora became an Englishwoman worth remembering.” Were women like Aurora remembered? What was the cost of their actions? The complexity and turmoil involved in such flight was never mentioned, and Caroline ended the paper quite simply:

Not all women could comfortably fit the Angel ideal. Women have so many other gifts and talents that do not include keeping house, and the world is a better place now that they are able to share themselves with the world. . . . The death of the Angel led to greater freedom for women, flexibility in lifestyle choices and opportunity for tremendous growth. There is no longer any condemnation when a woman does not conform to the Angel idea.

Caroline critiqued the Angel and in doing so challenged the sexist attitudes toward women in the past, but she resorted to the cliché “the world is a better place now” and her conclusion contradicted the present tense in the opening which suggested the angel is still among us, haunting all women. She concluded with a trite, simplified, all-is-well ending.
In other college assignments that required her to reflect on her own experiences, she often chose to explore sexism and its effects on her. Her other papers showed she grappled with these issues, but here she chose not to integrate her views or experiences with the material.

In an interview with me, the professor of Women Writers reacted to Caroline’s paper with the following comment and provided information on the makeup of the class and how Caroline often remained silent in it:

She drops the ball at the end with that ‘there is no longer any condemnation’ statement. She should have known better. She seemed unwilling to push further in her argument. And, she was one of the better students in class. She often remained silent during discussions because we had a dominant male in class, a nursing student who said there was no other choice and he had to take it. He was dead set against anything related to feminism, women's rights, etc. Not too many in the class were willing to take him on—the good girls might have fumed, but they wouldn't cross the line he drew. [Caroline] never took him on, as I recall.

In another English course, Autobiography and Memoir, taught by the same professor, Caroline wrote a paper that stood out as an exemplar of her willingness to take risks in her writing. One of the major assignments in the course was to write a spiritual autobiography. On the assignment sheet the professor opened up their choices for how to proceed: “Your spiritual autobiography can take any form you choose because it is your autobiography and should reflect you as you want to be understood.”
Caroline explained to me in an interview her choice to write her spiritual autobiography in the form of letters:

I wrote mine a little differently, in a series of letters to a brother I never met because my mother miscarried. . . . I always felt very close to him as a child and wrote his name on my parents’ birthday cards when growing up. And, I named him too. My parents always told me how I was obsessed with him somewhat. And I think I’ve blocked that out; there were these repressed memories. And I just wanted to get that out.

Since Caroline was generally unable to speak openly to her father about matters of importance to her, addressing her unborn brother and confiding in him was a way for her to dialogue with him about what bothered her and explore the relationship she had with her father and the unease she felt regarding her upbringing in the church.

Caroline began each section of her autobiography with “Dear Joey” and adopted the tone of someone confiding in a younger sibling. Writing the autobiography this way allowed Caroline to convey her father’s and church’s views (“they say”) and then to respond to them. It allowed her to express excitement to a family member, which was important to her since her father disapproved of her decision to switch denominations and be baptized at her new church. She wrote to Joey about the tension with her father:

I spoke with Dad about it multiple times, because as the spiritual head of my life right now, I wanted his support and permission. . . I never wanted it to be something that destroyed my relationship with Dad, but I could not ignore the pull
at my heart to obey. Finally, Dad came to the conclusion that since I am an adult he could not prevent me from doing anything, but he did not attend.

Caroline was integrating her understanding of the self, social, and the subject of the interconnectedness of spirituality and family. She accomplished the aims of the assignment and felt satisfied with the experience: “I think it was because it was beneficial to me to articulate my spiritual experiences to this brother I never met and to connect with him in some way. So it was probably a lot more meaningful than just writing it to write it.” And perhaps for Caroline it served as a sort of training ground on which she practiced articulating and supporting her views—so as to better equip her to speak with confidence some day to her own father.

The professor of a course Caroline took called Gender and Communication explained to me that she assigned a paper early on in the semester in which she asked students to examine the messages they received about gender while growing up and to articulate what shaped their particular perspectives on gender. In the opening page of the six page paper Caroline wrote for this assignment, she presented her father’s words about her being a “pretty little girl,” and throughout the essay she provided as well as responded to a series of her parents’ comments and expectations. Graff and Birkenstein (2010) suggested a writer should “summarize what ‘they say’ as soon as you can in your text, and remind readers of it at strategic points as your text unfolds” (p. 19). Caroline proceeded throughout the essay to explain what her father did or said (for example, his penchant for referring to their house full of females as “hormone heaven”) and then articulate the effect she felt it had on her—without equivocation or hedging.
Caroline turned her critical eye on her home life and parents and subtly presented their views (“they say”) and contrasted them with her current views (“I say”):

I began noticing that my parent’s marriage was not an equal partnership, and that my father was incredibly domineering. He controlled our family, he made our decisions, and my mother believed it to be her duty to be full of grace and submissive to her husband. This definition of submission did not work for me and I decided that I could never be married to someone that controlling.

Caroline articulated her desire to continue to define for herself what it meant to be female: “Though I have changed, my family has not. I have to continually remind myself not to allow their perceptions of males and females to cloud what I know to be true.” She continued her paper by citing examples of her father’s expectations and treatment of her and countering those with evidence that she was more competent than he thought.

Before reaching her conclusion, Caroline brought in one more view—her church family’s—and she ended this section by separating herself from their views and her parents’ acceptance of traditional gender roles:

People at church tell me that we have “such a wonderful family” and that my mother is a “good woman” and my father is a “great man,” but what makes them perfect role models for their sexes is stereotypical. My mother sews, she cooks, she cleans, she is a housewife, she is a submissive wife, and our friends enjoy that about her. My father works, he camps, he heads up the speedskating clubs in Ohio, and he cannot join anything without being in charge, because he is a leader.
He takes his role as “man” seriously. As a daughter in this “wonderful family,” I find myself not wanting to continue to be influenced in such ways.

In this paper, Caroline declared that she had “changed” and did not want “to continue to be influenced in such ways.” She examined—without “impulse and emotion”—how inaccurate her father’s perceptions of her intelligence were. She used this assignment as an opportunity to reflect on, develop, and reinforce her commitment to becoming a strong and independent female, capable of talking back to her father, if not in person, then in her writing.

In her senior capstone course in communication arts, taught by the same professor who taught Gender and Communication, Caroline was asked to write three papers in response to three books on the issue of calling and vocation. The professor explained the aims of the assignment: “I want students to know how well-known Christian authors/thinkers talk about vocation, demonstrate they understand the central arguments of the texts, and develop an argument to support or refute the author’s views.”

Caroline seized these opportunities and wrote dynamic and engaging responses to the central ideas put forth in each book. Each paper is essentially a critique of the Christian culture and follows a “they say/I say” structure, with Caroline putting forth the typical mindset of many evangelical Christians and then responding with her own views supported by the rather radical ideas in the particular book with which she had been asked to interact. To typify the common evangelical Christian views on various issues, she stated the views of her peers, her family, her fellow church members, and even her previously held, unexamined views. These all constituted the “they say” to which she
responded. Not only did these assignments ask Caroline to think critically about what she read, they prompted her to think critically about the group of believers in a faith tradition with which she aligned herself and asked her to take up or reject the authors’ views, which often contrast with the commonly accepted views of many Christians.

In the final and lengthy paper assignment for a senior capstone course in Communication Arts, the professor asked Caroline to reflect on “your perspectives as a first-year student in comparison and relationship to your perspectives now.” In an interview with the professor of this course, she told me she wanted students “to consider how their thinking has changed, to describe and name the growth in themselves that they’ve seen.” Graff and Birkenstein (2010) explain that the views “you yourself once had” can represent an important “they say” in the conversation to which you respond with what you now think (p. 24).

Caroline accomplished the aims of the assignment with a thoughtful 19 page reflection that captured her growth in sentences like, “Now at the end of my time in college, I can see the limitations of my initial expectations. A college education may not bring me to the logical next step—a well-paid job. It is not simply a transitional period; it is a time of discovery to learn who I really am and what I value as important.” She then explained the ways in which she has seen growth in herself intellectually:

Entering college, I did not yet make the connection that to know something means more than just being able to talk about it. . . . Now as I reflect upon how my ideas of knowing have changed, I think that to know something requires deep understanding and an unmistakable feeling about what it is that is known
Caroline referenced not only her previously held views but also numerous authors’ ideas that have helped to shape her. The “they say” portion of her paper is comprised of her unexamined, earlier ways of thinking as well as the various authors and scholars mentioned throughout the paper: “In multiple classes, I have studied Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs to see how everyone has the same basic goal in the end. I would argue with Maslow that the goal is actually not self-actualization, but just to be known. . . We seek recognition.” Her bold use of “I would argue with Maslow” showed her willingness to go toe-to-toe with heavy-duty thinkers and to show how she disagreed while also examining how she now differs from the student-thinker she used to be. This lengthy summative evaluation of her years in college provided Caroline with the opportunity to reflect on and conjure up the various conversations of which she had been a part and to respond to a multitude of “theys” with her own declarations.

Emily

Participant Background and Overview of Her Portfolio

Emily majored in English and graduated cum laude in the spring of 2009. She planned, after completing her undergraduate degree, to look for employment in the field of writing, editing or library science; and she also wanted to take some time after graduation to consider graduate school. During her undergraduate studies as part of the credits toward her major, Emily earned one credit hour of Applied Writing for her work in the campus writing center. She also worked on the editorial staff of the university’s student-run literary publication.
For this study, Emily submitted 20 papers written during her sophomore year through her senior year, totaling 142 double-spaced, typed pages. Included in her portfolio is a variety of types of assignments: research papers, personal reflections, exploratory essays, literary analysis papers, two pieces of creative historical fiction, a satire, and a spiritual autobiography. A wide range of rhetorical demands had been made of her, and included in her portfolio are assignments from courses in English, communication arts, history, Bible, and theology.

I met Emily when she was a student in my first-year college composition course. She was silent and seemed to me to have a blank expression during classroom discussions for nearly the entire semester unless I called upon her, which I did only on rare occasions. There were many boisterous students who contributed often, and Emily had no intention of vying for a role in the conversation. During that course, however, she submitted some of the highest-caliber, most creative writing I have ever evaluated in sixteen years of teaching college English. On occasion, I spoke with her after class, and she told me she planned to major in English. By the end of the semester we had struck up a friendship that lasted during her four years at the institution as an English major, during which she enrolled in three more classes I taught.

My colleagues in the department reported that in their courses Emily also remained silent during discussions unless called upon. One professor in particular even discussed with Emily how she ought to contribute more to classroom discussions. Emily, however, found it daunting to do so. Interestingly enough, Emily was unimpressed with the quality of her peers’ contributions to most class discussions; and in an interview with
me at the end of her junior year she spoke critically of the dynamics at work during class discussions. She ruminated on a sociology course in particular that she had recently taken that was discussion-oriented and dominated by the male students in the class:

I think men just know that they’re supposed to talk in class and that whatever they say someone else is going to agree with. And they just start discussing something, even if it’s completely wrong. I don’t know. I mean I had sociology last semester and there were these guys in there who never knew what they were talking about, but they’d just go on and on, and [the professor] would just stand in front of the class and be like, “really?” He’d just let them go on and on. And I’d think, “This is completely ridiculous. Where are you getting this stuff?” But everybody went with it.

Then Emily added a final comment about that class: “If the girls would have started something like that in that class, it would’ve been over before it started.” I asked her if she ever tried to contribute to the class discussion, to which she replied without further elaboration, “No.” When asked why, she said simply, “It’s intimidating.”

Emily entered college a shy, silent student, but she was an exceptional writer who longed to voice her thoughts in writing. In an essay written for an English course, she described her obsession with books: “As a child, I was painfully shy. I was always the quiet little girl in the corner with big eyes observing everything around her, book in hand. To some extent, I still am. It seems as if most word-slaves are like this. We are a rare breed, too scared to talk but willing to bear our souls on paper.” Emily was willing and able to “bear her soul on paper” and excelled when given the opportunity to do so.
Emily’s One-Sided Writing

In Emily’s portfolio, I identified 7 papers, of the 20 she submitted, in which Emily did not have to integrate the views of others with her own or to flex her rhetorical muscles—although she succeeded with each paper in that it accomplished the aims of the assignment. For example, in Women Writers taken during her sophomore year, Emily wrote a traditional literary analysis paper, contrasting Virginia Woolf’s Clarissa Dalloway with Toni Morrison’s Sula. For her history course called Medieval Europe, Emily was given the following writing assignment: “Take on the role of a Lord or Lady of a castle during the High Middle Ages (that is, c. 1050 to c.1300). You may base your paper on an existing castle or a fictional one (based on general principles you have found during your research). This paper is intended to be a ‘you-are-there’ description of castle life.” This topic seemed tailor-made for Emily, given her talent in creative writing; she adopted the perspective of Amelie of Versailles, the wife of Philippe who went on Crusade in 1210, and described the responsibility of running the estate. Writing such a paper allowed Emily to imagine someone else’s life and to show that she had done the serious research called for by the assignment. It is an example of one-sided writing, however, or what Belenky et al. termed “procedural connected knowing” in that Emily took on someone else’s perspective, and it is a type of writing that is essentially historical fiction which Emily accomplished with ease (see further evidence of her proficient one-sided writing in Appendix H).
Emily’s “They Say/I Say” Writing

In an interesting paper written for Style and Usage, an upper-division English course, Emily wrote a satire in which she included and addressed the views of others. She chose the topic of marriage, with a particular emphasis on marrying young, which is something many evangelical Christian couples are prone to consider or do. In an interview, she commented on the satisfaction she derived from writing the satire: “I had a lot of fun with that paper. . . . I had a few friends who got married early, and that let me look at their situation and write about it and analyze it, knowing they would never read it. I guess I kind of got to say some things that I could never say to them because that would be rude.”

In the piece, she recalled her mindset as a high school senior before coming to college and the way she realized it differed from others in her small town:

I was seventeen years old, about to go to college, and completely single. Marriage was something to worry about later, after my life was organized and I was happy. Surely everyone else my age felt this way too…right? Oh, no. Fast forward a few months, when I discover that three couples from my graduating class have gotten hitched. One of the couples hadn’t even been dating on that day in June when we threw our blue caps into the air. None of them ended up going to college in the fall. Two of the girls became pregnant and one of the boys joined the Army and was quickly shipped out. All lived in small apartments, trying to convince themselves that this was what they wanted from life.
She then mentioned how she thought that since she would be heading off to college marriage would hardly be a pressing concern. However, that did not prove to be the case: “Unfortunately, most of the girls on campus don’t seem to take my laid back approach to serious relationships.” Emily explained, with all the fervor of a satire, two of the “finest traditions” on campus, one of which is the Ringdown, a bizarre ritual that most first-year female students are initiated into quickly. Her description of the “large groups, barefoot and sleep deprived” who sing, clap, and pass a candle in a dimly lit circle conjure up images of unthinking followers of a cult. Despite the scathing criticism, Emily recognized the power such traditions can exert over young females: “As you tramp back up the stairs, you wonder about what your own proposal story will be. Will it be romantic? Will it be noteworthy?” Writing this satire in the spring of her sophomore year, Emily offered her retaliation:

College is about “finding” yourself and becoming an independent person. Though it surely sounds corny, I learn more about myself each day and am in no way the same person I was a few months ago. I look at the boys I used to think were wonderful in amazement, not because they are in fact wonderful, but because I’m curious about what I ever saw in them.

Emily referenced her previously held views of her male counterparts. She also acknowledged those who identified her desire to “find” herself as a corny sentiment. Although Emily stated she found it to be “a lot of fun,” it provided more than enjoyment for her; it allowed her the opportunity to talk back to a multitude of “they says” that represent a tradition and mentality with which she found herself at odds.
In a literary analysis paper, Emily wrote what was the most effective and sustained “they say/I say” piece of writing from the participants’ portfolios. It was a six page paper in which she examined various elements in Sylvia Plath’s poem “Lady Lazarus” and argued that it could be read as autobiographical. She also maintained that writing poetry was therapeutic for Plath and that possibly this poem helped to sustain her in her last year of life before her suicide. She titled the paper “Rising from the Ashes: ‘Lady Lazarus’ and Plath’s Mentality.” She chose words like “rising” and “mentality” instead of “dieing” or “falling” and “instability” or “mental illness.” Immediately in her title, she revealed her perspective of Plath as a survivor, unlike the tragic ways in which Plath is often referred.

Emily set up the paper by referring to the many critics who agree (“they say”) that Plath’s poem can be read, to some extent, as autobiographical. Emily agreed with them and worked off of this commonly-agreed upon way of interpreting the text. But she did more than just agree; she expressed her sympathy and admiration for Plath, finding her to be brave and resourceful.

Emily immediately turned her attention to the critics who suggest Plath’s poetic creativity somehow factored into and fueled her mental illness. She took on a critic with whom she disagreed, who suggested that Plath was angry about the failed suicide attempts:

Agreeing with Collins’ interpretation makes it seem as though Plath really didn’t mean to ever survive a suicide attempt--her poetry thus all comes from bitterness at being alive. However, I find it difficult to fully accept this view. While it may
be true that Plath didn’t intend to survive, I believe her ultimate goal was to triumph over her depression and past suicide attempts. Emily explored the idea that perhaps Plath has been misunderstood and wasn’t as fatalistic as the stereotypical tortured artist. She cited Collins and then disagreed with her view, a sophisticated “they say/I disagree” rhetorical move.

Emily demonstrated an ability to disagree with some authorities on the matter but also to write carefully so as not to come across as someone who is “close-minded” or thinks her “beliefs are beyond dispute” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 80) with constructions like “This can be read like” and “perhaps” before her assertions. She understood it was effective in academic writing to write in a way that showed her mind was not completely made up. She entertained counterarguments and “planted a naysayer” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 80) in her text and talked back to the authorities.

For her course in East Asia, Emily was required to write a research essay. The instructor’s assignment sheet explained that the purpose was “to encourage you to engage in an area of scholarly inquiry that is of particular interest to you as it relates to East Asia.” In an interview with me, the instructor recalled that Emily asked specifically if she could focus on a topic that the professor had mentioned in class: the Korean sex slaves used in camps in the 1940s. She recalled Emily being very interested in doing further reading on these women and thought that perhaps Emily could relate to the women’s powerlessness, since Emily herself is soft-spoken and seemingly docile.
Emily titled her paper “The Diary of Kim Cho, a Comfort Woman” and wrote it as a series of 12 journal entries by a fourteen year old girl coerced into the sex trade by the Japanese in 1940. In one entry she wrote, “I do not cry, because if I do, it will only make things worse. I lay back while they celebrate another victory by ravaging my body. My face turns to stone and I imagine that I am a blue-winged butterfly floating over the scene.”

Emily wrote about how Kim Cho, with “ruined body and scarred memory,” fled the camp after it was deserted on August 14, 1940 but dared not return home. She then flashed forward forty-two years to 1992, to the emotional and physical devastation that endured for women like Kim Cho who were “haunted by the daily rape endured” and ill from the toxic No. 606 injections they so often received. She described Kim Cho’s reaction when she was contacted by The Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan and asked for her story: “They say they are rallying for justice. Our justice. I wonder why it matters now. I do not want an apology from the Korean government. I do not want money from the Japanese government for the ‘work’ that I did. The one thing I want is to have my happiness and innocence returned to me. This is something I can never regain.”

I thought, after my initial reading of this paper, that perhaps the piece was less contentious than it could have been or that Emily could have done more to condemn the events. In an interview with the professor of the course, though, she mentioned that Emily was “being true to how those Korean women would have felt at that time. She knew, like they knew, that they were powerless and had become ‘damaged goods.’ It’s
only been recent—very recent—that there’s been any recognition of this evil. [Emily] showed that if you were living at that time and place, you would think like that.” By allowing the women to speak and emphasizing their resilience, she was giving voice to a wronged and silenced population. Her writing served as a powerful form of protest against the wrongdoings.

In an interview, Emily and I discussed this course and the professor in particular, and she mentioned that she had the professor for two courses other than this East Asia one. Emily casually mentioned that this particular professor had started calling on her during class, and I asked her why she thought the professor was attempting to draw her out and encourage her to contribute to discussions. Emily referred to the lengthy papers she had written for the professor on which she earned high grades: “I think the papers I wrote like the one of the comfort women kind of clued her in that I wasn’t talking as much as I knew. I wasn’t talking as smart as I was. It wasn’t clear to her before that I had things to say and that I understood what was going on.” I asked her how comfortable she was with being called upon in class:

I guess my writing has given me confidence to speak out a bit and voice my opinions in ways that I wouldn’t have before. I think I’ve kind of realized it’s important to be the same person you are in person as you are on paper. And so, I can write these bold things but if I’m not backing them up with my words and my actions then I don’t know, maybe they’re not as effective as I want them to be. It kind of gives me more experience to work off of, I think.
Natalie

Participant Background and Overview of Her Portfolio

Natalie majored in Nursing, a rigorous and demanding major with a significant amount of time spent off-campus in clinical settings. During Natalie’s senior year, she seriously contemplated signing on with Teach for America after graduation and using her science background and passion for work with urban populations to teach in an inner-city school. After a great deal of thought and conversation with others, however, she decided to use her BSN in nursing and take a job that had been offered to her by a hospital at which she had worked part-time during her summers.

Included in Natalie’s portfolio are 19 papers, totaling 115 double-spaced, typed pages. Nine of those papers are from various courses in Nursing. The other ten are from her general education requirements in sociology, English, Bible, personal finance, and history. A variety of rhetorical demands were made of her, including letter writing, personal assessment, personal reflections, research papers, exploratory essays, literary analyses, and an oral history.

Natalie was very quiet in the classroom, and when asked if she wished she participated more often in class discussions, she said “nursing classes have eighty or so students, so we don’t have a lot of discussion.” I asked her if she felt free to take a stance in her writing or to assert her ideas in papers. She responded, “Yes, but at the same time I need to say that probably most of us in the nursing program would choose the same stance. It’s usually not, ‘what would you do?’ It’s usually, as a nurse, ‘what you should do.’ You take the principles that we know nursing to be and apply it to a situation.”
When I asked her if writing papers happened easily for her, she replied, “Usually. . . . Papers in nursing are more research and fact and more organizing research that you’ve found, not thoughts that you had about it. And you’re given a rubric for what to include and you just write it down and you get the points. It’s always about the research that you found or the articles and what they say you should do.”

Natalie’s One-Sided Writing

In 10 out of 19 papers Natalie submitted for this study, she did not have to go beyond describing her actions or explaining course material. In several papers for her nursing courses, Natalie was asked to assess her performance or to reflect on her behavior and habits. In a paper for a course in nutrition, Natalie assessed the results of monitoring her food and fluids intake for a twenty-four hour period. In another paper, she demonstrated her understanding of various ways to teach patients about the drugs prescribed to them. This type of paper is an important one in which she described and analyzed her performance, but it did not require her to make and support a claim or advance the conversation in any significant way. And it was a five-page paper that was not difficult for her to write, especially given its narrative framework (see Appendix I for further examples of her one-sided writing).

In a seven-page paper written for a 400-level nursing course, Natalie began, “Mental health in the community requires the collaborated efforts of many different agencies, professionals, and facilities. . . . Gaining an understanding of how each of these pieces work together is a valuable asset to a nurse who helps to plan and collaborate treatment for clients.” She used four sources on psychiatric nursing to explain the
differences between crisis centers in the community and hospital in-patient settings. She
also explained the roles of nurses in both settings. She concluded in much the same way
as she began:

A nurse who is well-informed of the mental health system can provide complete
and effective care to clients. By gaining an understanding of how agencies are
designed to work, the responsibilities of the nurse and other treatment team
members, barriers to treatment and other community resources, a nurse can be
prepared to deliver comprehensive care.

Natalie’s “They Say/I Say” Writing

Like Caroline, participant one, Natalie had been a student in my upper-division
writing course, in which she wrote several personally-meaningful essays. In the paper
she worked hardest on during the course, she ended up writing, after a period of
indecision, about the value of a friendship she has with a member of the college cleaning
staff who comes on campus from the local MRDD program. Natalie worked off of Ellen
Cushman’s ideas from an academic article in which Cushman argued that social change
can and should take place in the “particulars of daily living.” She also referenced “ivory
tower-dwellers” who become “completely consumed in scholarship and forget those who
don’t share the same blessings.” Natalie acknowledged that hers is a position of
“unmerited privileges”:

I can afford (though barely) to attend college and choose my own course of study
and direct my own career path. I can leave if I want. I can apply for positions
and jobs which would be impossible for my friend Ida to hold. I can live on my
own. I can buy a plane ticket, or rent a car, or ride my bike anywhere in the world. Whether I choose to see it like this or not, and whether I like it or not, I have unrestricted access to the blessings bestowed upon me through access to education—the ivory tower. And Ida does not.

Natalie worked off the idea that college students think they can’t take a stand on many social issues because of their confinement on campus and their assumption that social injustice exists far off elsewhere. She responded with her stance: “Every one of us is capable of creating social change by determining to live our lives in a way that isn’t confined to social norms and stereotypes.” She concluded with a reflection on her experience as well as an assertion:

I have not contributed to any skills which may further her career path—I haven’t taught her how to read Shakespeare or balance a checkbook or do anything practical or useful. But somehow, the fact that we are coming from such different places and are such unlikely friends gives the friendship a special purpose. We fall in different circles, socially speaking, but having a connection allows us both the benefit of seeing a bit into the other side. In this way, social change is being created. Against the overbearing current of society, in simple day-to-day interaction, Ida and I have become partners in reversing the status quo. Our connection isn’t customary, and people take note.

Natalie was three years into college in a difficult course of study that often left her feeling removed from the needs and demands of people less fortunate than she, whom she desired to serve. This paper helped her to dialogue with herself, Cushman, and her peers
to realize her actions were in line with what Cushman was advocating, and in writing this she was able to express her position to others in the class who read and responded to her essay.

In a ten page research paper, Natalie explained the measures for preventing ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP), an infection that develops in ICUs in patients who are intubated. She explained contributing factors and causes of the infection and the statistics, citing research as she did so. She also explained that the Department of Health formulated strategies, or “bundles,” for interventions. Oral care, she argued, was not addressed: “The ventilator bundle neglects to cite the most effective interventions. Recent research utilizing various methods of oral care has provided evidence of effective nursing oral care measures in preventing VAP, highlighting the importance of nursing education and implementation of evidence-based practice.”

In a paragraph in which she drew on her observations during clinicals and cited no research or outside sources, she criticized the practices she observed in a clinical setting:

Currently, oral practice protocols are less than ideal. At X Medical Center in X, Ohio, for example, nurses are required to provide oral care every two hours. . .

This protocol, as it is written, would likely reduce the risk of VAP. However, as observed on the unit, most nurses merely swab the mouth, suction a few times per shift, and chart it as oral care, which is neither systematic nor thorough.

She finished that paragraph by criticizing what is “lacking” in the hospital’s policies and called the current oral care “haphazard and incomplete.”
She also argued that oral care “is imperative and will improve the patient’s psychological well-being.” She argued also that the costs of such care are minimal in comparison to pneumonia-related costs. “Providing oral care to patients on ventilators may be taxing to already understaffed hospital units. Nurses may find oral care to be an option or low priority . . . But, the evidence-based research should inform a nurse’s approach to care.” Natalie was dialoguing with the members of her profession.

In her Professional Nursing course taken the spring of her senior year, Natalie was asked to write a short but important paper she called “Philosophy of Life and Nursing.” In it the “they say/I say” structure is evident when she cites her previous view of nursing as well as the view of many nurses with whom she has worked: “Nursing is a steady paycheck.” She followed that with, “I’ll admit that I first decided on the major for selfish reasons: the jobs were plentiful, the content seemed interesting, there are a lot of opportunities.” She explained what she learned through her education and her work in clinics and hospitals:

Nurses have more to offer than bedpans and ice water. Nursing is a holistic way of seeing a person for who they are and determining how to intervene to help them improve. It’s a lot about the relationships—the human interaction of one person caring for another . . . Yes, it’s about knowing what each medication does, and knowing how to respond to unplanned events, but it’s also about being present, being comforting, and being a real person.
She mentioned again the popular sentiment that nursing is a good job that provides decent pay and a significant amount of time off, and she responded: “I’ve realized I don’t share that mentality, and that has pointed me in the direction of community and public health.”

Natalie wrote about the ideal nurse, the type she aspired to be: “She does not treat the monitors and machines, but she sees the person lying in the bed, and the family gathered around them.” Overall, the paper is short; it’s only four pages, and it’s somewhat naïve in that she ended abruptly with platitudes: “A good nurse skips her coffee break to spend more time with a concerned pre-op patient. . . . She relies on the Lord for unending patience and kindness.” A longer more thorough investigation of her strengths and passions and how those might factor into her vocation (of the sort Caroline, participant one, did at the end of her communication arts major) would have been more beneficial for a student about to embark upon a difficult career that just weeks prior she had considered not entering at all.

**Madison**

**Participant Background and Overview of Her Portfolio**

Madison majored in Middle Childhood Education and graduated *summa cum laude* in May 2009. Her concentrations were in math and language arts, and she obtained licensure and planned to teach middle school after graduation. Madison was a hard-working, conscientious student I met in my first-year composition course. At the end of her sophomore year, she married another undergraduate at the institution, whom she had dated since high school.
I found Madison to be both fiercely independent and focused on achieving high grades. At one point in my interviews with her, she mentioned wanting to keep her successful grades relatively private, and I asked her if she was embarrassed by her high grades. She explained what she meant:

Not embarrassed. I just don’t really want other people to know because that puts a stigma on you. Just the other day, we got papers back in a class and someone saw my grade and said, “Oh, I hate you.” They’re like, “You’re the smart person.” And I don’t want people to feel their grades are any less because I got a higher grade than them. So, I’d just rather people not know I get good grades. I mean I hope they respect me that I have a clue what I’m talking about, but they don’t need to know I got an “A.”

Madison was the most outspoken member of this study, someone not hesitant to participate in class. But, when referring to her willingness to participate in class, she emphasized that she tried always to take care to be diplomatic and not dominate discussions: “I think when I’m in class, I don’t want to come off to everybody else as kind of haughty, as if I’m the only one who knows what I’m talking about.” In her writing, though, she felt she could express her views and ideas freely: “But with my papers, I know only the professor is reading it; and I’m more comfortable being more forward and bold in what I say. Cause you don’t want to be the person that always thinks they know everything they’re talking about. I mean your classmates pick up on that.”

Madison’s portfolio contains 25 papers totaling 154 double-spaced typed pages, written for college courses in education, English, youth ministry, math, theology, Bible,
sociology, politics, and history. Madison drew on the successful experiences she had in high school, and she developed confidence in writing for her college professors early on: “A lot of times my papers involve spewing back what we learned in class, because the professors are looking for that. . . . I think I write to what I know the professor wants . . . because I can understand, I can usually figure out the way the professor wants it” I asked Madison if she had had opportunities for argumentative writing or to assert strong opinions on topics that mattered to her. She responded by saying that her education classes consisted mainly of “lesson-planning type papers and units” and “spewing back. . . . I’m an assertive person. But, I haven’t done it a lot in my writing.”

**Madison’s One-Sided Writing**

Of the 25 papers Madison submitted for this study, 17 of them were papers that did not require her to make and support any kind of claim; nor did they demand that she assert any ideas or views of her own. She was required in these papers to reflect on her personal experience; summarize articles, a movie, and a case study; or synthesize material into traditional research papers, which amounted essentially to reviews of the literature.

Madison was skilled at accomplishing many assignments by reflecting on her own experience and writing in ways that established a connection with the audience and created what she hoped would be perceived as an earnest writer-thinker who learned from the assignment. In an interview, she reported:

> I like to be different. I like to make my papers stand out from the crowd. . . .

Sometimes when I don’t connect to stuff I find a way to at least act as if I did. I
guess I’m too good at manipulating. There are so many classes you know you
don’t have to work hard in. I act as if I care, though. I act as if I did the reading
or act as if I like or thought about what I read. I find one part of it that I
did read or like and expand on that.

Belenky et al. (1986) found that writers who took this type of approach wrote “not to
express meaningful ideas but to manipulate the listener’s reactions” (p. 108). Davis and
Shadle (2000) insisted that “even advanced students are content to do what they know
how to do: present the knowledge made by others, write within set conventions, and
produce what they have been conditioned to believe teachers want” (p. 425). Madison
said it herself that she was “too good at manipulating.” She had an approach upon which
she could rely and that resulted in papers that nearly always earned her “As.”

In a paper written for a history course, Madison wrote an explanatory paper in
which she summarized the events in Michelangelo’s life that influenced his work. In an
attempt to distinguish her paper from her peers, she began and ended it by trying to link
Michelangelo in some way to her uncle named Michel Angelo, but she had difficulty
doing so since the two had so little in common.

In a lengthy paper for a politics course, Madison used sources to summarize the
goals of the recently elected Guatemalan government leaders and their views on
terrorism, global economy, the environmental crisis, technology, migration, and foreign
policy. Madison said about the paper, “I hated it. I didn’t enjoy the content at all. And at
one point after I had been working on it for a while, OK, this is horrible of me but I
looked up my course points on the e-companion grade book and I saw that I only needed
to get a D on this paper to get an A in the class. And I wrote one more sentence and turned it in. And I got a 48/50 on it” (see Appendix J for more examples of her one-sided writing).

**Madison’s “They Say/I Say” Writing**

Only two of her papers written for education courses offered an extensive opportunity to work off of a “they say/I say” structure. In a paper called “My Position on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities,” there is some evidence of a dialogic argument. She presented both sides of the debate regarding full and partial inclusion of students with disabilities. She covered the reasons for each side, as she understood them; and she also included biblical references that could support each side. These uses of scripture lacked relevance and were most likely included to give the impression that she integrated her faith with her learning, a move faculty at the institution are encouraged to help students make. She mentioned toward the end of her paper that “I want to do my part in serving God through serving others, and that means no discriminating or excluding His creation.” However, the issues and debate surrounding partial and full inclusion do not allow for discrimination or exclusion; the issues center on what is best for all students. Madison ended the paper with a very quick and naïve conclusion in which no conclusion at all was reached: “I want to attend to my students in the way in which God has convicted me, and that is to include every student in my classroom, no matter the background or abilities he or she may bring to the table.”

In a course called “Education and Issues in the Middle Schools,” Madison wrote a 12 page paper she called “Management Plan” that began: “Teachers, especially those
pursuing employment in the middle grades, need to have a plan in place regarding the ways in which they intend to manage their classroom.” She relied on two print sources and two interviews with teachers to describe what she believed to be important regarding setting up and managing a classroom in the middle grades.

She focused specifically on how she learned from and expanded on one author’s metaphor comparing young adolescents to rivers. She built on that metaphor, emphasizing how easily they can be polluted:

One nature in adolescents that I believe is especially strong is their impressionability. They can be easily influenced, and I could see this as the pollution of a river. Influences can dump toxins such as drugs, alcohol, sex, cheating, and all sorts of other “trash” into an adolescent’s life, and it can be very easy for those young people to let that waste flow along in their lives.

She articulated what she found to be the most salient characteristic of young people in terms of establishing her approach to working with them: “Middle school students are searching—for love, for belonging, for identity, for meaning in their lives.” She argued, therefore, that it is important to establish classrooms where students feel safe, empowered, cared for, and understood. She also asserted her views on classroom management by highlighting the strengths she observed in one teacher’s approaches to classroom management and the weaknesses in another teacher’s management strategies.

For a required course called New Testament, Madison wrote a paper about the debate surrounding whether or not women should be in leadership and ministry positions within the church. In an interview with me, she explained that the paper was “prompted
by a disagreement I had with my sister. My sister and I had a not heated but lively conversation. She and I disagree, and I wanted to look at the verses that people use on both sides of the argument, skewing them to support their view.” In the paper Madison explained the various reasons why some Christians believe women should not serve as pastors; she cited the scriptures typically used and argued that they are used out of context and without a thorough understanding of the Greek translation. She responded to the “they says,” which were comprised of her sister-in-law and the many voices opposed to women in the ministry that she allowed in her paper. She cited the statistics of women in leadership positions in various denominations and emphasized the importance of women refusing to bury their gifts.

She concluded weakly, however, with a cop-out: “We’re bound to have different opinions because God made each of us differently. . . . The important issue is that we share a common love of God and a relationship with His Son Jesus Christ.” When I asked her about her diplomatic ending, her refusal to take a strong stance, and posing the title as a question (“Women: Can They Lead?”) instead of a declarative phrase, she responded: “Well, it’s supposed to be a research paper and I was more supposed to be reporting research on it and integrating twelve sources and stuff, and just getting all my sources in. And I had written so much, fourteen pages, and I got burned out by the end of it.”

When I asked her if she felt she was heard in that conversation with her sister, during which both of their spouses were present, she said, “not overly. Part of that is because I’m seventeen years younger than her, and [Madison’s husband] was more of the
driving force in that conversation. . . . [Madison’s husband and her sister’s husband] are both young pastors. They have more of the hermeneutical and biblical background, and I don’t have the background, so I didn’t want to voice my opinion as much as [Madison’s husband] did. But no, I don’t think they heard us.” She found the paper to be a more conducive venue for making herself heard, and she said, “It’s something I’d love to hand over to my sister, but I think she’d be offended by it or that it was challenging her beliefs in a disrespectful way. But that’s why I wrote it. . . . I’d like to say to her that this is just another way it could be looked at.”

During Madison’s senior year, she took a course called Faith in the World Seminar, writing a paper in which she took on the views of a Catholic author who opposed the use of birth control, particularly the birth control pill. She called her paper “To Use or Not to Use.” She summarized the views of the author in several pages, laying out the author’s arguments and admitting that they had merit and caused her to re-think the debate. However, she was not willing to concede the author’s points: “In one of Smith’s [the author’s] last arguments, she presents the Church’s view that contraception prevents bonding, one of the first arguments with which I am not sure I entirely agree.” She then stated her position: “I believe that contraception can be used in marriage, as long as it is used properly with the right perspective and intentions.” She explained why she uses contraception and then addressed what Graff and Birkenstein (2010) would call a “naysayer”: “While some of the Catholic faith may have suggested simply waiting to be married—which I understand, as I was young—I believe that [her husband] and I would
not have been able to be used by God in the ways in which we have been for the last two years without being married.”

In an interview, Madison mentioned this as one of her most satisfying papers written while in college:

The professor like this paper. I got an “A” on it, which is a huge accomplishment from that professor. . . . I think in some ways I was challenging him and his perceptions, and he liked that, because I knew that he’s Catholic and I know where his beliefs lie, and I know where mine lie or I guess I’m still trying to figure some of it out . . . obviously. I think he liked it because I went through the reading that we did and went through a lot of the author’s arguments against contraception and said ‘OK, I see your argument; now here is my perspective on it.’ We [my spouse and I] didn’t really line up under her argument. . . I think this was my best paper defending what I thought and asserting my voice and opinion. Although she approached the paper and concluded it with a more qualified and hesitant tone than she could have otherwise taken, she was writing for a scholar in philosophy, whom she knew was Catholic and who opposed her views, and she did so with confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

Beth

Participant Background and Overview of Her Portfolio

Beth double-majored in business administration and accounting and graduated in May 2009 magna cum laude. During the fall semester of her junior year, she studied away from the university in an urban environment for an intensive internship.
At one point in collecting data, Beth mentioned to me that she felt inadequate contributing her work to my study since it was typically “dry” and “straight-forward” business writing. Because she had been a student in an upper-division writing course I taught, she knew the type of writing I assigned and enjoyed reading. I assured her that I was very interested in all types of writing students do, and tend not to have much opportunity to examine the range of their assignments as college writers. I encouraged her to remain in the study, and she agreed to do so. In an interview, she said that the type of writing required of her in the School of Business is “fact-based and researched with lots of information” and that she did “learn a lot about the subject matter” from that type of writing. But, she said, “we don’t have papers assigned very often.” She mentioned that she did write a great deal when she was studying for a test, generally in the form of re-writing her notes so that they made sense. I asked her if she felt she had taken courses in business that never assigned papers, and she said that she had taken many courses that did not require papers but required assignments that tended to be what she classified as “homework, number-crunching, studying, and group projects.”

For this study, Beth submitted 15 papers written during her sophomore through her senior year, totally 91 double-spaced typed pages. Included in her portfolio are a variety of assignments: a customer complaint letter, two movie reviews, business plans, research papers, an analysis of her personality type, and a paper based on an interview. The assignments were given in courses she took in business, accounting, English, history, and theology.
I asked Beth about her business professors’ expectations, when papers are assigned, and what they typically looked for: “I think they are preparing us for the business field, so I think they just want to see us developing those skills that are going to be important later: getting your point across and being concise about it, you know, if you’re writing reports or proposals. They’re not lengthy. So I think clarity and organization are important also.”

I asked Beth what type of writing she found challenging. She responded, “I think the most difficult types of writing would be the more reflective writing. Where it’s not just find material and put it in my paper and cite it. But when I have to spend time thinking and coming up with material on my own and find the courage, if that’s the right word, to put it in my paper and have the professor read it.” I asked her if she enjoyed those types of papers and she said, “They definitely do mean more. I invest a little bit more in those. I’m somewhat more anxious when waiting to get those back. Those types of assignments cause some tension. They take more time, more effort. I want to do those well.”

In Beth’s portfolio, there are concise business papers and various assignments that are considered explanatory papers—in which she focused mainly on getting her “point across”—as well as the more reflective type of writing that caused her tension.

**Beth’s One-Sided Writing**

Out of the 15 papers Beth submitted for the study, 7 of them required little more of her than describing her career goals and work experiences, conveying material she already knew, or explaining information she recently acquired.
Beth wrote two papers for her course in Marketing, earning full credit for both of them. For one of them, she was asked to take on the role of an “active consumer” and write a complaint letter to a company in which she had recently been disappointed due to a faulty or ineffective product. She was given eight types of information to include in the letter, one of which was: “State what would be a fair resolution from your point of view. Do you want the product repaired or exchanged? Do you want your money back? Say exactly what you want done.” Beth completed the assignment with a short letter that concluded with, “For the first time, your product did not live up to the standards I have come to expect. I look forward to your response.” She did not say what type of action she wanted; she did not adopt an assertive tone. And yet, she received full credit and a “Nice Job!” by the professor.

In a four-page paper written for World Cinema, Beth compared and contrasted two movies and how they naturalized the lives of indigenous people. But, she did not make a controversial claim, nor did she have to enter into a debate. In fact, the way she went about contrasting the movies was supported by the course material, and it is more of an explanation paper than a position paper. She used the material in the special features and the text to explain naturalization and how it occurred in both films. The instructor awarded her a 95% on the paper and commented on her “relevant, well-explained citations from the special features and readings.” The professor did suggest she could have done more to analyze 10 Canoes in ways that might not have let it “off the hook” so easily. Still, she sailed to another easy “A” (see Appendix K for further examples of her one-sided writing).
Beth’s “They Say/I Say” Writing

For a course in business management, she was required to write a paper based on a book called God Is My CEO. The purpose of the assignment was stated as: “to give you an understanding of how biblical principles and unwritten business rules and demands may clash in our world and to give you the chance to evaluate how you may respond to such situations in your own life.” This was a paper with potential for “they say/I say” shifts, and there are a few evident in Beth’s short paper. The “they says” are comprised of the material she was asked to read and respond to: the book written by a Christian business professional, and included in that book is an articulation of what most would consider to be typical unwritten business rules and principles to which most professionals in business adhere.

Beth began her paper with a claim, the “I say,” which mentioned the two sets of “rules” she read: “The list of unwritten rules and Godly principles are pretty much mutually exclusive. I do not think, however, that any single person draws from just one half of the list. I think that every single person uses a combination of the two to drive their business situations.” Her claim that everyone uses a combination of the two principles contradicted her opening line that the lists are mutually exclusive. But, Beth was taking course work in a School of Business that is comprised of professors who integrate their Christian faith with their approaches to business and their teaching of their courses in business, so she was careful to draw on both approaches to business. She continued on with what would seem obvious and understandable given what she had
stated in her short introduction, but it reads like a confessional: “I was surprised to see how I identified with the different halves of the list.”

She explained that although she is a Christian who knows and understands the Godly principles mentioned in the reading, she does not “practice them like I should.” And then she mentioned some of the unwritten business principles, such as working for results and recognition and aspiring to positions of leadership, with which she aligns herself. She defended her tendencies toward these secular principles: “On the topic of leadership, I believe that a leader can be first but still serve others.” Beth, a very driven and bright young business major, was hedging; and instead of making a plan for practicing the principles like she “should,” she continued to admit her spiritual shortcomings as an aspiring business professional. When explaining how the godly principle of “giving” related to her life, she wrote, “So while, yes, I seem to be rather giving, involved on campus, and in volunteer positions, a lot of that stems from a desire to achieve Who’s Who and to make a line item on my resume.” She critiqued her inner drive and motivation and said she wished she were more altruistic. Beth was awarded 50/50 points by her professor who wrote “Nicely done” at the end and had responded throughout the paper with smiley faces and underlining throughout the body of the text.

In a paper on which she earned an “A” written her senior year for a business course, Beth examined Section 8 Housing and stated her thesis in her introduction: “Discussing Section 8 housing—including its background, need, costs, benefits, and effectiveness—will show that this policy would be more effective if updated.” She drew on a number of sources to explain the original Housing Act of 1937, the changes that
have occurred in the legislation, and the current statistics of those eligible for Section 8 housing, a number that “far exceeded the number of people receiving assistance.” She overviewed the cost and benefits and then began the conclusion of her paper: “The existing Section 8 program can be considered ineffective because of its convoluted structure, high monetary costs to the federal government, lengthy waiting list, and low percentage of families actually assisted. . . . One has to believe that this same dollar amount could be used in a more effective way in order to assist a greater number of families.” Then, Beth ended her paper quickly with: “Or we could ask ourselves why poverty exists in today’s world at all—especially in this country—and target the underlying causes rather than just attempting to make those living with the effects more comfortable.” If this question were important to her, however, it would have seemed more beneficial for her to explore it carefully and possibly argue for why and how we ought to “target the underlying causes” of poverty.

A Discussion and Cross-Case Analysis of the Participants and Their Portfolios

Question 1: How much did the research co-participants write while in college? Participants were asked to submit formal papers written for any of their courses taken their sophomore, junior, and senior years that were assigned with the expectation that they would be taken through a writing process resulting in at least three typed pages that would be evaluated as a significant portion of the course grade. Based on the number of papers each participant was able to locate (without reporting difficulty doing so) and submit for this study, it is evident that they were asked to engage in writing papers frequently during their undergraduate education. Five students submitted a total of 107
papers. Beth, the double major in business and accounting, had only 15 in her portfolio, the fewest number of papers from a participant in the study, partly because she had studied off campus for one semester in an internship and I did not want to include those papers since they were not representative of her experiences at the university from which she and the other participants graduated. Overall, based on the number of papers submitted for this study, the students were required on average to write at least 3 major papers each semester.

Question 2: In what types of writing did they engage? The participants attended an institution committed to liberal arts education and were required to take a minimum of 50 credit hours in general education courses from a wide range of disciplines. In the portfolios, therefore, there are papers written from a vast array of courses: accounting, Bible, business, communication arts, education, English, history, journalism, math, marketing, nursing, physical education, philosophy, politics, sociology, statistics, and theology. The papers were described in this study according to the type or mode of discourse that dominated the paper: narrative and description of personal experience, summary of material read or film viewed, research paper, exploratory essay, spiritual autobiography, creative writing, historical fiction, literary analysis, satire, business plan, letter. Each participant wrote a variety of those types of papers, with a minimum of four different types of discourse listed here required of each student.

Question 3: Which papers did they feel benefited them most and why? Caroline and Emily both mentioned their spiritual autobiographies as papers that were beneficial to
them. When this question was posed to Madison, she responded with the following assessment of her writing experiences in general:

When I had certain profs, I was pushed to put in my own voice, to assert my opinion, to stretch myself, and I did so... and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I grew as a writer because I think I had healthy parameters and I was pushed. . . There were just so few classes in which I had the freedom to do what I wanted to do or what I cared about.

Invariably, as was the case with Madison, when asked this question the participants quickly directed the conversation toward the type of writing they did not feel benefited them. Madison disparaged writing that amounted to a “spewing back what we learned in class.” Emily disliked the type of writing required of her in a journalism course and explained that she felt, “To write like that . . . it’s just so dry. It’s not you.” Beth, in accounting and business, answered the question by saying that “reflective writing” benefited her most; then she contrasted it with what she found least beneficial: “Where it’s not just find material and put it in my paper and cite it. But when I have to spend time thinking and coming up with material on my own.” Beth described her typical process of completing most of her papers: “just find material and put it in my paper and cite it.” Natalie described her process and products: “Papers in nursing are more research and fact and more organizing research that you’ve found, not thoughts that you have about it.”

Question 4: Where and to what extent is there evidence in the portfolios of their written work that they learned how to form and support personally meaningful positions
in the context of a larger conversation? All five of the participants from five different majors in this study were given some opportunities “for the personal and disciplinary to interact in a dialectical fashion” (LeCourt, 1996, p. 400). The fewest opportunities were given to Madison, the middle childhood education major. Out of the papers assigned to her, only 32% of them allowed her to experiment with asserting a claim of her own. She wrote 17 papers that posed relatively little challenge to her, papers she explained were written in response to “ridiculously boring and unrelatable” paper assignments. Emily had the most opportunities for the personal and disciplinary to interact, with 65% of her assignments calling for a “they say/I say” exchange. Approximately half of the papers assigned to the other three participants required a dialectical approach.

As evidenced in the portfolios, all five participants were experimenting with writing that worked from a “they say/I say” stance, but the amount of page space devoted to the actual “I say”—to their own convictions and ideas—indicates that the vast majority of their writing was tilted outward. For Caroline and Emily, 21% and 22% respectively of their portfolios were devoted to “I say” claims and support for those. For the other three participants, the numbers are significantly lower: For Natalie 11% of her work is “I say.” For Madison only 10%, and for Beth 16% (see Appendix L).

Question 5: What types of assignments required the writers to form and support claims of their own? And conversely, what types seemed to preclude such engagement? The paper that required the writer to posit claims of her own and then provide the most extensive support of all of the papers came from Caroline’s portfolio. The paper was for her senior capstone course in communication arts and it was called an
“integration/summative evaluation paper.” The assignment sheet explained the requirements: “In a ten-page (minimum) paper, consider how the mission and goals of the college and department have been realized in your experience and life. Support your evaluation with specific references to your coursework, internships, work outside of class, anything you have done while a student.” This works off of a thesis/support framework, but it also required Caroline to make personally meaningful claims, assessing the way educational goals were realized in her life.

As evidenced in the discussions of Caroline’s and Emily’s portfolios, literary analysis papers and research papers were approached dialectically in some instances and handled as distanced, explanatory papers in others. In some cases, the participants took the opportunity to form and support a claim of her own, but in other cases the very same student could and did get her “A” without staking out her own territory and defending it. Caroline opted out of making a claim of her own in her Women Writers paper, but she was willing to write dialectically and argumentatively for that same professor in her spiritual autobiography for another course.

The spiritual autobiographies, satire, and historical fiction papers were the most creative and unique pieces that required a “they say/I say” framework. All three assignments required the writers to maneuver between voices and positions, with the writers making a personally meaningful assertions and supporting them.

The papers in particular that only conveyed subject matter or were traditional research papers were the ones Caroline, Natalie, and Madison all mentioned they were able to complete with very little personal investment. There were numerous papers in
each participant’s portfolio that did not make rhetorical or intellectual demands on her beyond the scope of what she could accomplish with relative ease. Each participant reported that she wrote papers that were not challenging for her to write: they required that she reflect on her personal experience separate from a larger conversation, explain the subject matter, or present the views of others without integrating them with her own ideas. They did not require that she enter a conversation, posit a claim of her own, and marshal evidence and support for it. All five participants in the study wrote summaries of books, articles, or movies and were not pressed to critique them or situate them in a larger conversation of ideas. Four of the five of them wrote literary analysis paper in which they did not have to do anything beyond summarizing the literary criticism and integrating it to support a claim from one of the critics. All five participants also wrote papers that were reflections on personal experience, with a rather simplistic retelling of events that had happened to them without serious analysis or an exploration of those that might have contributed to a different understanding of the events than they had before they started the writing.

**Summary of Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 presented an overview of each participant’s experiences with writing while in college, a description of the contents of her portfolio, and excerpts from the interviews that revealed her views on writing. It included selected passages from as well as detailed descriptions and analyses of the papers the participant wrote that challenged her to integrate others’ ideas with her own and write from personally meaningful
positions. In some instances, the assignments that led to the more challenging papers were described. Also a cross-case analysis was included.

In chapter 5, a review of the study and the pedagogical implications of the findings are presented as well as suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This study sought to determine how often writing provided five college students with opportunities to shape and assert their ideas in response to others. This purpose of this study was to find out what types of assignments were required of five women at one university and what rhetorical approaches they took when completing those assignments. Writing is routinely assigned to students in college, and there is wide-spread agreement and support for the basic goals of writing across the curriculum—promoting active learning and improving critical thinking through writing (Oschner & Fowler, 2004; Thaiss & Porter, 2010). Since what students “learn by using writing depends on their response to a specific task” (Ochsner & Fowler, 2004, p. 126), this study focused on the writing tasks five students engaged in, the rhetorical approaches they used to complete those tasks, and their attitudes towards them. A qualitative, post-structural feminist approach to research was used. Participants were interviewed over a period of two years, and the techniques of discourse analysis were used to assess portfolios of the participants’ papers written from their sophomore, junior, and senior years of college.

Women were selected for this study because research has shown that many women are uncomfortable with and lack experience asserting their ideas (Belenky et al., 1986; Hammill 2007; Hartman 2006; Jarratt 2007; Martin 2000). This study was undertaken with a particular focus on assignments that encouraged the college women to engage others in contentious conversations, and attention was paid as well to the approaches they took in those assignments. Lamb (2002) and Jarratt (1991) insisted that
women must be taught to work with conflicting views and argue about public issues, looking inward as well as outward and allowing the two to “interact in a dialectical fashion” (LeCourt, 1996, p. 400). Graff and Birkenstein (2010) found that “the underlying structure of effective academic writing—and of responsible public discourse—resides not just in stating our own ideas, but in listening closely to the others around us, summarizing their views . . . and responding with our own ideas” (p. 3). One way of determining if and under what conditions the five women in this study were having these types of dialectical opportunities was to focus specifically, as this study did, on when participants constructed personally meaningful, dialogic arguments.

The following five questions guided this investigation:

1. How much did the research co-participants write while in college?
2. In what types of writing did they engage?
3. Which papers did they feel benefited them most and why?
4. Where and to what extent is there evidence in the portfolios that they learned how to form and support personally meaningful positions in the context of a larger conversation?
5. What types of assignments required the writers to form and support claims of their own? And conversely, what types seemed to preclude such engagement?

The first section of chapter 5 reviews the data that pertains to the first three questions that guided the study. It focuses, therefore, on the amount and predominant types of writing students did while in college and the participants’ assessment of the benefits or lack thereof derived from different types of assignments. The second section
of chapter 5 summarizes the findings that address questions 4 and 5, with an explanation of the extent to which participants asserted and supported personally meaningful positions in writing. Several types of assignments that encouraged such engagement are overviewed in that section as well. The third part of chapter 5 includes implications for educators. The last section of this chapter includes a reflection on the research process and suggestions for future research.

**The Amount and Predominant Types of Writing Assigned and the Participants’ Attitudes Toward Writing**

The participants attended a university that focuses one of its educational goals on developing students who are able to “write clearly and effectively.” The participants were high-achieving students who were able to write clear and effective prose with very little difficulty, even in the first papers submitted for this study, which were written in the fall of their sophomore year. While perhaps the sheer number of papers each student submitted for her portfolio (ranging from 15-28 papers from each participant) and the proficiency of the writing reflects positively on the university’s goal, it became evident through examining the writing and interviewing the participants that they were developed writers even early on in their undergraduate education, and it was relatively easy for them to accomplish the aims of most assignments because those assignments rarely stretched them as writers and thinkers. Emily had the highest ratio of challenging papers in her portfolio, but still 1/3 of it consisted of one-sided papers she accomplished with ease. Nearly 2/3 of Madison’s portfolio consisted of papers she found to be relatively easy to complete (see Appendix L).
Madison, the middle-childhood education major, reflected on the effort she put into the majority of papers in her portfolio:

I only did as much as I knew I needed to in order to get the A (which goes along with what I said earlier about knowing what my profs wanted) and then stopped there. . . . I often wrote my papers and barely re-looked at them before I turned them in other than a quick glance through to make sure they had some basic flow because I knew that I was grammatically pretty sound.

When I asked Natalie, the nursing major, if writing papers happened easily for her, she replied, “Usually. . . . [Y]ou’re given a rubric for what to include and you just write it down and you get the points.”

Madison explained that her education classes consisted mainly of “lesson-planning type papers and units” or “spewing back what we learned in class.” Natalie explained the predominant type of papers assigned in her courses: “Papers in nursing are more research and fact and more organizing research that you’ve found, not thoughts that you had about it.” Beth, in business and accounting, described her process of completing the papers assigned to her: “just find material and put it in my paper and cite it.”

For the participants from the fields of business/accounting, nursing, and education, between 1/2 and 2/3 of the papers in their portfolios were predominately summaries of material, what Graff (2003) called “rehearsals of information” (p. 9). While papers of this nature may have served to prove to the instructor that the student knew the subject matter, had done the requisite reading, and could explain it clearly in writing, the benefits of such assignments for a high achieving student were negligible:
she did not have to invest in the writing process for a lengthy amount of time or with much effort, nor did she have to develop and use a rhetorical strategy different from a standard approach she had already mastered and relied upon often, as evidenced in their comments above.

Each participant had written papers in courses from at least four different academic departments on campus. Caroline, for instance, had been asked to write papers for courses in physical education and statistics—courses not normally associated with a great deal of assigned writing. Those papers show little indication, however, that writing had been used as a heuristic, and there is no evidence of any type of dialectical process. The assignments were either description of personal experiences, as was the case in the physical education course, or in the case of the statistics paper, an explanation of a basic statistical study conducted. The paper for statistics allowed the instructor to determine the student had designed and completed a basic study. Through the writing of these types of papers, however, very little discovery was made and no experience was gained in taking a position on an issue.

The one-sided assignments submitted for this study, which amounted to 54 of the 107 papers collected, rarely stretched the students beyond what they were already capable of as good writers. All the participants in the study felt very confident in their writing abilities because they were able to accomplish their writing tasks without difficulty and achieve their “A’s.” Gage (1995) argued that “there is a direct relationship between students’ development as thinkers and the discovery of meaning in the struggle to compose discourse” (p. 715). All five participants expressed a sense of drudgery they felt
while completing papers that predominantly involved summaries and distanced research, but never did they report struggling to compose those papers. When there is little struggle in the composing of a paper, there is likely to be very little growth as a thinker or discovery of meaning.

It is often not difficult for students with motivation and a facility with language to succeed in the academic achievement game. School writing offered very little challenge to the high-achieving students in many of the studies from the review of literature (Bishop 1990; Martin 2000; Miller 2005; Hartman 2006; Collins 2008) or the high-achieving students in this study. Gage (1995) argued that “Students improve as thinkers in small, undetectable increments of change, brought on by the level of challenges they face. It is only when they are put into situations where better thinking is called for that they will be challenged to produce it” (p. 728).

The Papers Worth Celebrating and Learning From:

Where and How Can We Do Better?

If Gage (1995) is right, students ought to be put in situations that challenge them to develop as thinkers and invest in their writing process. When I asked Beth, the accounting/business major, what type of writing she found challenging, she responded, “Where it’s not just find material and put it in my paper and cite it. But when I have to spend time thinking and coming up with material on my own and find the courage, if that’s the right word, to put it in my paper and have the professor read it.” I asked her if she enjoyed those types of papers and she said, “They definitely do mean more. I invest a little bit more in those. . . . Those types of assignments cause some tension. They take
more time, more effort. I want to do those well.” Beth did not feel challenged by assignments that Hairston (2005) described as “explanatory” because “the material for such a paper already exists,” and her primary job was “to dig it out, organize it” (p. 81).

Emily, the English major, mentioned investing heavily in her spiritual autobiography. In it she was required to examine the views of those who helped to shape her faith. Emily dialogued with her early religious training that consisted of hell-fire and brimstone messages from the pulpit of an Apostolic church; she brought in her family’s views as well as those espoused by members of the various churches she attended. She also boldly described the faith she claimed for herself. She said of that paper, “I think it was the only paper I ever stayed up all night writing, just writing and rewriting, starting over and stopping.”

What was revealed to me through this study was that a variety of types of assignments, such as the type Hairston (2005) called “exploratory” and even highly creative ones, can provide the most engaging ways for students to enter a contentious dialogue. According to the assignment sheet provided to me by the instructor of the autobiography and memoir course, the spiritual autobiography required students to “trace the progress” of their beliefs and examine “how the past affects the present and future.” In doing so, the students engaged their past and the people who informed their early views on faith. The exploratory essays I assigned also showed evidence that Caroline, Emily, and Natalie were working within a “they say/I say” structure; this surprised me because it is not a framework I teach explicitly and I tended to think of those essays as predominantly personal inquiries. Caroline, Emily, and Natalie spent at least half of
those papers talking back to the ideas of authors and others in their lives. The assignment
given to Emily by the professor of the course on East Asia required research, but the
professor allowed the traditional, formal paper to be replaced with a creative project
provided it “engages in an area of scholarly inquiry that is of particular interest to you as
it relates to East Asia.” For that paper, as explained in chapter 4, Emily wrote the diary
of a comfort woman, thereby entering a complicated and contentious conversation about
East Asian history.

The challenging assignments listed above “provided a way for the personal and
disciplinary to interact in a dialectical fashion” (LeCourt, 1996, p. 400). Or, they
encouraged the writers to use their own past experience as the source from which to
construct a new position. Many of the alienated and marginalized, Greene (1995) argued,
have been made “distrustful of their own voices” (p. 111). These assignments
courage students to assume a sense of authority by allowing them to “ground new
learning in what they already know” (p. 111). These are the types of assignments that
arise from feminist pedagogy, and more emphasis in the college writing curriculum must
be placed on this sort of rigorous, active, open, contentious, engaged discourse.

Graff and Birkenstein (2010) valued the type of writing that “invites you to
become a certain type of person: a critical, intellectual thinker who, instead of sitting
passively on the sidelines, can participate in the debates and conversations of your world
in an active and empowered way” (p. 12). Even though Caroline and Emily, who
engaged most often in contentious dialogic writing, did not sit passively on the sidelines
or shy away from controversial issues, they still often chose to work within the “good girl” framework—careful not to offend.

They wrote many papers on topics they cared deeply about; very few of them, however, demanded that they sustain an argument by advancing a claim and marshalling thorough support for it in ways that would have challenged them more and contributed to their ability to argue well in public settings. When I analyzed their dialogic papers closely, I found that most of them displayed some evidence of the writers engaging in argument, but they could have done more to support a personally-meaningful claim. Those assignments offered them the chance for a sustained argument, what both Graff and Birkenstein (2010) and Belenky et al. (1986) refer to as moving the conversation forward, but often the writers failed to seize that opportunity, thereby missing a chance to broaden their argumentative powers and bolster their public voice. But the assignments, for instance Caroline’s paper on the “angel in the house,” did not require them to support their claims more extensively or do anything differently than they did in order to succeed and get their high marks.

What happened in many of the “they say/I say” papers is that the writer exhibited her willingness to listen closely to and summarize the views of others and respond with her own ideas; but she often took a “safe approach” when doing so, being careful not to offend, and she was rarely required by the assignment to marshal evidence to support her view. Madison said of several of her papers, “I made plenty of claims that I never backed up; I knew I didn't need to because my profs wouldn't call me out on them and some of them probably wouldn't even notice that I didn't back them up because it was something
they already agreed with and wanted me to believe.” Many of the professors’ assignments invited students into a conversation, but they did not have “to disagree with others, to challenge standard ways of thinking . . . to stir up controversy” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 8). The co-participants in this study were rarely required to write extensive arguments, to the degree that they had to make a claim or position early on and then support it throughout the paper with an extensive use of evidence. They tended to position their claims much too late in their papers, and they often consisted of “statements that nobody can possibly disagree with” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 8).

As evidenced in Appendix L, only between 1/4 and 1/3 of the “they say/I say” papers were devoted to the claims and ideas of the writer. Either they were not given or they did not have to follow (in order to achieve their high grades) Graff and Birkenstein’s advice to writers: “summarize what ‘they say’ as soon as you can in your text” and as soon as possible move on to “your own position” (p. 21). Madison explained that she failed to make her claim that women can serve in the ministry earlier in her paper and more boldly because “I was more supposed to be reporting research on it and integrating twelve sources and stuff, and just getting all my sources in. And I had written so much, fourteen pages, and I got burned out by the end of it.”

When the participants in this study were not required to engage in contentious dialogue, they usually avoided doing so. For instance, although I had created a linguistics research paper assignment that I thought would nudge Caroline to engage in dialogue with her sources, and the professor of the course on women writers had done the same, Caroline achieved “A’s” on both papers without having to posit her own claim and
provide support for it. Encouraging students to assume a more central role in a larger, contentious conversation often requires more than a nudge on the part of the professor; it requires creating assignments that demand that their voice is a leading one in the chorus of voices in their writing.

The paper Caroline wrote for gender and communication was a rare example of a paper that was predominantly “I say.” The professor of the course explained to me that she asked students to examine the messages they received about gender while growing up and articulate what shaped their particular perspectives on gender. Students were required to posit their claim at the outset then elaborate on it and support it throughout the rest of the paper, thus making the student’s voice a more vital and necessary component as to compared to, for instance, the research papers in the portfolios.

**Implications for Educators**

Weisser (2002) suggested that instruction in writing should be aimed at developing students’ abilities to contribute to public debates. But Lester et al. (2003) insisted that in order for that to happen, students “need to have more control of their writing” (p. 28); and we need to focus our efforts and assignments on helping them make the shift away from “teacher- and text-controlled ways” of writing” (p. 28) and an over-reliance on what others say.

There were papers submitted for this study that challenged the participants to engage in a dialectical interaction; and since they were written in response to professors’ assignments, our attention ought to be directed there. It seems plausible that Caroline and Emily had more opportunities (15 and 13 respectively) to experiment with the “they say/I
say” structure because they took more courses taught by professors committed to developing assignments that helped students “discover there is indeed an argument afoot, and that there are models and places for them to enter that argument in dialogue” (Bruce et al., 2008, p. 5).

Papers written by Caroline and Emily that were comprised of extensive “I say” portions of discourse were written for professors (the professor of Autobiography and Memoir and the professor of Gender and Communication) who gave assignments that aligned with feminist pedagogy. Those professors encourage students to “embrace conflict instead of working to avoid it” (Siebler, 2008, p. 37) by creating writing assignments that demand students enter a contentious conversation. The quotes provided earlier from the assignment sheets of the spiritual autobiography and the communication papers demonstrate that the assignments were extraordinary opportunities given by professors who initiated students into the realm of academic and public discourse not just by inviting them into but by insisting that they enter a conversation.

Madison, the education major, lamented the fact that she was rarely challenged and rarely had professors who created assignments she found to be compelling:

There were just so few classes in which I had the freedom to do what I wanted to do or what I cared about. . . . I have to wonder how many students could be stronger writers if they were given more healthy parameters--ones that push them to succeed and guide them in the intended direction while giving them the freedom and creative liberties to enjoy themselves in their writing. I think profs
have a lot more power than they realize. They DRIVE the work they receive more than they will ever know.

As a way of guiding students to succeed as well as making dialogic writing less intimidating, McCracken simply described the rhetorical move students need to make as “talking back” (Bruce et al., 2008, p. 5). The parameters for the assignments that the English and communication arts professors gave do not include a reference to the “they say/I say” structure, but they put students in a position to enter a conversation. Gage (1995) insisted that “thinking is situational, in the sense that we respond with ideas of our own when we find ourselves in situations that demand ideas from us” (p. 725). Teachers can put students into such situations. The professor of Gender and Communication and Caroline’s senior capstone course did just that for Caroline. Caroline, as evidenced in the excerpts from that paper in chapter 4, entered the contentious conversation of ideas most successfully and thoroughly in her papers for that professor. In those papers, Caroline entered and brought numerous conversations together, making connections between her courses and subjects.

One way Caroline’s professor coached students to write dialogic argument was to ask them to interact with their previously held views. On the assignment sheet for the lengthy paper written for the capstone course, the professor explained one of the ways students should enter a conversation of ideas: “consider your perspectives as a first year student in comparison and relationship to your perspectives now.” Graff and Birkenstein (2010) suggested to students that “the ‘they say’ that you respond to need not be a view held by others; it can be one that you yourself once held” (p. 24). Caroline and Emily
both engaged their previously held views in their spiritual autobiographies as well. Less extensively, Madison, Beth, and Natalie engaged their previously held views in papers on their professions or a specific aspect of them; for instance, Madison discussed her previously held views on inclusion of students with disabilities. Assignments that ask students to reflect on what they thought in the past versus what they think about an issue presently could provide opportunities to experiment with dialogic writing, using themselves as their “conversational partner” to whom they respond (Graff, 2003, p. 156).

All five research co-participants in this study said they generally enjoyed their writing assignments and felt confident when doing them. Although all were confident writers, only Madison reported being comfortable enough to vocalize her thoughts and opinions in class. And still, she tended to hide her high grades when papers were returned and take care not to seem too presumptuous in classroom discussions: “I think when I’m in class, I don’t want to come off to everybody else as kind of haughty, as if I’m the only one who knows what I’m talking about.” In her writing, though, she felt she could express her views and ideas freely: “But with my papers, I know only the professor is reading it; and I’m more comfortable being more forward and bold in what I say. Caroline reported, “I enjoy writing down what I think. I feel smarter when I write.” When I asked her what it is she liked about writing papers since many students dread them, she responded, “Class discussions are so dominated by men. It’s the only forum we have, maybe.” Her experience decades later was not so different from the experience Martin (2000) recalled when she described rarely hearing a female student “voluntarily speak out in class” (p. 89). When Emily discussed how her history professor began to
call on her and nudge her to enter the classroom discussions, Emily expressed a sense of satisfaction that the papers she wrote showed the professor that “I wasn’t talking as much as I knew.”

It is important for educators to consider that women and members of any marginalized group can benefit by using their papers as a forum for articulating and testing their ideas. Students who refrain from joining the classroom conversation stand to gain a great deal from the writing they do when it provides them with the opportunity to put forth their ideas assertively and construct personally meaningful positions in written conversations. Emily commented on what, in her estimation, she gained from her writing: “I guess my writing has given me confidence to speak out a bit and voice my opinions in ways that I wouldn’t have before. I think I’ve kind of realized it’s important to be the same person you are in person as you are on paper.”

Students who are reticent to speak in class and/or socialized to avoid conflict can gain, through their writing, invaluable experience and confidence in articulating their views and expressing themselves. We ought to consider that one of the most important aims of college writing might be that it helps prepare students—especially the unassertive ones—to learn to argue in such a way that others will pay attention. We must examine the writing curriculum to ensure that students are having opportunities to explore, develop, and assert their ideas in their writing. Lynch, George, and Cooper (1998) insisted, regarding the teaching of college writing, that “We need to see argumentation as a crucial social responsibility” (p. 411).
One of the educational goals of the university at which the co-participants in this study attended is that students “develop the reasoning skills necessary to evaluate and construct arguments well.” This goal is not necessarily focused on students developing these skills through their writing, and there have been no efforts made during my ten years as director of composition to assess how writing might be used to achieve that goal. Nor have there been cross-curricular discussions or workshops to discuss how and where students are being required to construct and participate in arguments. As evidenced by the college writing submitted for this study, all five participants engaged in dialectical argumentation to some degree, but the amount of page space devoted to their own convictions and ideas indicates that the majority of their writing was devoted to the subject matter and/or others’ ideas (see Appendix L). The nursing major and education major devoted a mere 11% and 10% respectively of the writing they submitted for this study to their own assertions and ideas. Certainly, their education ought to involve more opportunities to assert, test out, and support their own views.

I suggest that if we do indeed “see argumentation as a crucial social responsibility” (Lynch, George, & Cooper, 1998, p. 411), then there must be greater effort made in composition studies to direct the writing curriculum toward helping students develop the ability to engage others’ ideas in dialogic writing and support claims of their own. Graff and Birkenstein (2010) explained, “despite this growing consensus that writing is a social, conversational act, helping student writers actually participate in these conversations remains a formidable challenge” (p. xi). It is a formidable challenge,
but this research study shows there are professors meeting that challenge and helping students enter such conversations.

**Reflections on the Process and Suggestions for Future Studies**

Conducting this research allowed me to examine the writing and attitudes toward it of five bright, ambitious, and talented college women. I was fortunate in that I selected participants who were willing to reflect on their writing and provide the compelling insights that they did. Evoking Lather, Siebler (2008) gave advice I tried to follow: “step aside to make room for the participants’ voices” (p. 83). Determining how we can better assist college women in taking risks and entering contentious conversations can best be accomplished only after we have solicited and listened to their explanations regarding the rhetorical choices they made.

This study contributes to the body of research on how educators can improve writing instruction aimed at preparing students—especially bright but unassertive women—for more active citizenry and public discourse. For those who wish to build upon this study, I would suggest further studies focused on women and the ways they compose, using the same process I did: interviewing women about and locating in their writing the ways they engage or avoid handling opposing views and assert or do not assert their own claims. Also, studies like Hartman’s (2006) and Ashley’s (2001) that involved working-class female writers take into account not just sex but class. Issues of class and race are never far from the classroom, especially one in which student writing is a component. Further studies on the ways class and race influence women’s approaches
to academic and public discourse would inform us further of the rhetorical challenges faced by women from all different walks of life.

Further studies are also needed on the types of writing students do as undergraduates so as to examine the range of the rhetorical opportunities they are being given. We need to investigate whether or not students are being asked to try out their rhetorical powers in a variety of ways. Also, studies including males as participants are warranted as well in order to contrast their attitudes toward and approaches taken in their successful college writing. What does their writing show about their willingness to assert their ideas and state their positions? By what rules would male participants in a study like this say they are using to play the academic achievement game?

It occurred to me during the final stages of the study and when I was communicating with the recent graduates regarding their job searches and/or positions attained that I would like to conduct a study that follows women from their undergraduate experiences into the workplace—to determine how they are negotiating the rhetorical demands in the professional realm. Haswell (2008) suggested that type of research “would stretch the longitudinal measure through college into the years after college. Within this reach, even case studies are rare” (p. 343) Haswell applauded one such study that included women in the workplace and asked them to reflect on their writing in college and how it may have helped them “start acquiring a sense of authority” (p. 343). Studies like this get at the very heart of whether or not our goals in higher education and writing, specifically, are being achieved.
Studies that examine women’s writing and attitudes toward public discourse while in college and then also after graduation could be one way to determine how the academy might better serve women as well as students from all walks of life. Also, research into how students build on their rhetorical skills after they leave college might also indicate why and how we should teach all students “public writing”—writing that serves the purpose of giving students experiences with discourse outside the classroom. Weisser (2002) explained that she hopes to prepare students for success in academic discourse, in future careers, and “in their ability to speak and write discourse that will enable them to take part in the political and social spheres of American life” so that they might “become active citizens who are capable of using language to defend themselves, voice their opinions, and take part in public debates” (p. 94). This study has helped me to realize that accomplishing these goals requires vigilance and involves shaping a writing curriculum and creating writing assignments that demand students enter into conversations with others—on the page. By doing so, I and others in the field of composition studies might better help students become capable, active citizens—off the page—who can validate and learn from others’ views while “talking back” and directing attention to their own informed assertions.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Appendix A

- How often do you contribute to class discussions? Why is that? Are you more comfortable with writing papers or speaking in class?

- Do you enjoy writing the papers you’re required to write in college? If so, why? If not, why not?

- Do you feel confident and comfortable completing your papers? Why is that?

- What part of the writing process do you least enjoy? Most enjoy?

- What types of writing assignments are difficult for you and why? Which ones don’t you enjoy writing and why?

- What types of writing assignments do you feel benefit you as a learner and writer? Why and how?

- What qualities do you believe college instructors value in the writing of college students? Why?

- Is there a paper you’re particularly proud of? If so, why?

- Tell me about the paper you wrote for [course title] called [paper title] on [topic]. How did you decide to write about that topic? Did you enjoy the process of writing that paper? Was it challenging? Are you proud of it?

- Which papers stand out in your mind from the year? Why?
APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
February 23, 2010

Cathi Fussner
TLCS

Re: #10-058; "I Feel Smarter When I Write: the Academic Writing Experiences of Five College Women"

I am pleased to inform you that the Kent State University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your protocol through the expedited (Level III) review process. Approval is effective for a twelve-month period:

February 24, 2010 through February 23, 2011.

Federal regulations and Kent State University IRB policy require that research be reviewed at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. The IRB has determined that this protocol requires an annual review and progress report. The IRB will forward an annual review reminder notice to you by email as a courtesy. Please note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to be aware of the study expiration date and submit the required materials. Please submit required materials (annual review form and copy of current consent form) one month prior to the expiration date.

HHS regulations and Kent State University Institutional Review Board guidelines require that any changes in research methodology, protocol design, or principal investigator have the prior approval of the IRB before implementation and continuation of the protocol. The IRB must also be informed of any adverse events associated with the study. The IRB further requests a final report at the conclusion of the study.

Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP): FWA Number 00001031.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 330-672-2704 or Fwashington@kent.edu.

Sincerely,

Paul Washington
Manager, Research Compliance, Communications and Initiatives

to: Dr. James Henderson
APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
March 12, 2008

Cherie Parsons
TLCS

Re: 08-393: “Dissertation: Factors that Hinder and Help College Women Writers Assert their Authority and Voice their own Understandings Rather than Mimic Others”

Dear Ms. Parsons:

I am pleased to inform you that the Kent State University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your Application for Approval to Use Human Research Participants as Level II research. This application was approved on March 12, 2008 and is effective until the project end date of September 30, 2008.

HHS regulations and Kent State University Institutional Review Board guidelines require that any changes in research methodology, protocol design, or principal investigator have the prior approval of the IRB before implementation and continuation of the protocol. The IRB must also be notified of any adverse events associated with the study. The IRB further requests an annual review/progress report and a final report at the conclusion of the study.

If it becomes necessary to extend your project beyond the indicated end date, please submit a change form indicating the request for this extension.

Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP); FWA Number 00001853.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 330-672-2704 or tifered2@kent.edu.

Sincerely,

Tonya Frederick, R.N., B.S.N.
Research Compliance Administrator

cc: Dr. James Henderson

Division of Research and Graduate Studies
Office of Research Safety and Compliance
(330) 672-2704 • Fax: (330) 672-2858
P.O. Box 5196, Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

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APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title: “I Feel Smarter when I Write”: The Academic Writing Experiences of Five College Women

Principal Investigator: Cherie Parsons

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Purpose: I am seeking to learn about the experiences women have as writers while in college. I would like to find out about the opportunities and types of assignments undergraduate have been given.

Procedures: I will be collecting any papers you have written that you would like to submit and analyzing them in terms of the type of writing assignment that prompted the paper and the approach taken when writing it.

Benefits: The research will not benefit you directly, but the analysis of the documents you provide will contribute to the body of knowledge in English education, helping scholars to better understand the opportunities students have to write while in college.
Risks and Discomforts:
There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Privacy and Confidentiality
I will store your papers in my home office and refer to them using a pseudonym. I will shred the documents once my research is finished.

Compensation
N/A

Voluntary Participation
Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Cherie Parsons at 330.620.1434 or Dr. James Henderson at 330.672.2580. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

Consent Statement and Signature
I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

Participant Signature                                      Date
APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM FOR FACULTY
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title:
“I Feel Smarter when I Write”: The Academic Writing Experiences of Five College Women

Principal Investigator:
Cherie Parsons

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Purpose:
I am seeking to learn about the experiences women have as writers while in college. I would like to find out about the opportunities and types of assignments undergraduate have been given.

Procedures:
I will be interviewing you for approximately 20-30 minutes, asking you about the writing assignments you give in your course, the purposes those assignments serve, and what you typically look for in (your evaluative criteria of) those papers.
Benefits:
The research will not benefit you directly, but the analysis of the information you provide will contribute to the body of knowledge in English education, helping scholars to better understand the opportunities students have to write while in college.

Risks and Discomforts:
There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Privacy and Confidentiality
I will store your responses in my home office and refer to your comments and assignments anonymously in my research.

Compensation
N/A

Voluntary Participation
Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Cherie Parsons at 330.620.1434 or Dr. James Henderson at 330.672.2580. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

Consent Statement and Signature
I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

________________________________    _____________________
Participant Signature     Date
APPENDIX F

PARTIAL OVERVIEW OF ONE PARTICIPANT'S PORTFOLIO CONTENTS
**Appendix F**

**Partial Overview of One Participant’s Portfolio Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper Course</th>
<th>Yr/Sem</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Pgs</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Rhetorical Approach &amp; Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soc215</td>
<td>So/F06</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paper #1 letter—displays her knowledge of two main approaches to research studies in the social sciences; writes from a social scientist at a univ. perspective, requesting a research partner and support for a project that seeks to study the viability of a NASCAR race in WVa or Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nurs252</td>
<td>So/S07</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Too Good to Be True? analysis—examines the advertisement for Ubiquinol as an anti-aging supplement; pokes holes in the claims made; uses research articles on the potential positive effects it may have on the heart; suggests it “may be beneficial to use this supplement as a complementary therapy in dealing with heart failure” They say/I say They = the supplement’s advertisement &amp; more authoritative medical articles which she calls “Advice from the Top”; gives her “I Say” at the very end in a qualified endorsement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nurs252</td>
<td>So/S07</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self Assessment Nutrition &amp; Fluid Intake self study/analysis—monitored food and fluid intake for 24 hrs; uses text material and summarizes the importance of: fat, carbs, riboflavin, calories, protein, calcium, iron, potassium, sodium, Vit A, thiamin, niacin, Vit C, folate; applies each summary to her own diet, analyzing where she could improve then she concludes with “I discovered I had many more deficiencies than I thought I would” and mentions what changes she plans to make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nurs214</td>
<td>So/S07</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Effects of Felodipine: Client Training self-assessment/reflection on professional experience—explains how she determined the best way to teach a patient about a new drug being administered to him; assesses her success in teaching him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bib121</td>
<td>So/S07</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Saul of Tarsus: From Church Persecutor to Church Founder explanation—chronicles Saul’s early life and then emphasizes his persecution of Christians, giving his reasons; uses sources to trace the events of his life; focuses on his being struck blind and then healed &amp; his subsequent transformation; suggests a reason for his name change and emphasizes his was not “converted” the way we typically think (pg. 10); uses secondary sources and the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nurs311</td>
<td>Jr/F07</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Family Processes: Caring for the Family research paper—explains various diagnoses that apply to families that experience a significant change in routine; argues that one diagnosis in particular fits with the patient discussed They say/I say—uses a variety of sources and shows her understanding of the various diagnoses; gives her support for why she thinks the one diagnosis is appropriate (pg. 4+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

EXAMPLES OF CAROLINE’S ONE-SIDED WRITING
Appendix G

Examples of Caroline’s One-Sided Writing

“Richard Hill examines several problems critics have found with the ending to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Hill refers to this critical examination as ‘overreaching,’ a term suitable to the digging by critics who are determined to find something more than what Twain had intended.”

- for American Literature

“Stories of World War II have been told through books, film, and song, in ceremonies and museums. My grandfather, Jerry Loth, is currently working at adding his own voice to the collection. He is writing a book with his wife Gladys—my grandmother, and they have tentatively titled it ‘Snapshots.’ They hope to fill it with stories of their own experiences of the war.”

- for American History

“My nerves were fed by a lack of confidence in my own abilities as a climber. We learned the four steps of SRENE and how to care for ropes in the classroom, but that did little to help when I found myself stuck on the rock knowing what move came next but lacking the courage to complete it. The beauty of rock climbing is that every climb is different, because in that moment of fear I always forget that I have done something similar on other climbs and that I do possess the ability to do it again.”

- for Physical Education

“As business becomes more competitive, corporate responsibility is becoming a key factor in gaining customers. When prices are relatively similar, often a company’s good reputation becomes a selling point for consumers. Prudential Financial and Nike have both committed to programs that place their brand name in a favorable light to increase their appeal within markets.”

- for Public Relations
APPENDIX H

EXAMPLES OF EMILY’S ONE-SIDED WRITING
Appendix H

Examples of Emily’s One-Sided Writing

“My name is Amelie of Versailles, and I am the lady of the Chateau Noble. The year is 1210, and my husband, Philippe, is one of the many men away on Crusade. Our son, James, is only five years old, and so I am serving regent over him. Philippe has been gone for nearly a year, and I have done my best to rule the castle with a strong but compassionate hand while he is gone.”

—for Medieval Europe

“I believe that Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem, ‘The Lady of Shallot,’ can be read as a cautionary tale for women of the Victorian age who felt the desire to step away from their customary roles and venture into and explore the world around them.” [Note: Her claim is derived from her reading of the required course material commenting on Tennyson’s poem.]

—for British Literature

“Godey’s Lady’s Book was the first major magazine to focus solely on issues of interest to women. It was the most circulated monthly magazine in the latter half of the 19th century, and it broke new ground in giving a voice to women by having a female editor who fought for the publication of multiple issues featuring pieces written by women only.”

—for American History

“Over the next four years, as they [Mahlia and Sasha] watch the weight of a nation bear down on [their father’s] shoulders, see the gray hair and wrinkles start forming rapidly, they will be forced to acknowledge that he is not perfect, cannot fix everything, and maybe is not a knight at all, but instead a finite human with no superpowers. . . A change is coming, and dark days could very well come with it.”

—for Creative Writing
APPENDIX I

EXAMPLES OF NATALIE’S ONE-SIDED WRITING
Appendix I

Examples of Natalie’s One-Sided Writing

“A nurse who is well-informed of the mental health system can provide complete and effective care to clients. By gaining an understanding of how agencies are designed to work, the responsibilities of the nurse and other treatment team members, barriers to treatment and other community resources, a nurse can be prepared to deliver comprehensive care.”

- for Nursing across the Lifespan

“Frost utilizes symbolism, reflection and forecasting to develop his theme of regret. . . . As Larry L. Finger states, almost ‘all critics have thought the sigh to indicate regret.’

- for Literature in Society

“We don’t need to have material wealth to be happy, because with the Lord as our provider, we already have all we need. . . . Since the Lord is the ultimate sustainer and provider of everything that I need, I can rest in knowing that I will be taken care of.”

- for Personal Finance

“I introduced the medication . . . explained what type of clients should be using it . . . took time to explain the administration instructions of the drug. Mr. Harris was cooperative throughout the teaching session.”

- for Nursing Clinical
APPENDIX J

EXAMPLES OF MADISON’S ONE-SIDED WRITING
Appendix J

Examples of Madison’s One-Sided Writing

“When he died in 1564 at sixty-nine years old, Michelangelo passed on as a man never to be replaced. He was always ambitious, leaving behind many unfinished works after his death. He was a definite example of a new modern emerging man . . . His personal life did impact his art. As he went through rougher times, his work became more contemplative and complex.”

-for World History

“All teens deal with changes and different emotions during adolescence, some just deal with the issues differently while others have different issues to deal with. In I Am the Cheese, by Robert Cormier, Adam Farmer struggles with many different issues, including love, suspicion, and especially a loss of identity and the search for answers.”

-for Nature & Needs of Adolescents

“Clefts of the palate, which often—but not always—occur alongside a cleft in the lip, develop early in the embryo and are present at birth (Peterson-Falzone 1). While the cause is not known, researchers do know that it can be inherited but cannot be prevented (Gibbons 54). It has been found that cleft palate is more common among males rather than females, and studies show that it occurs in approximately 1 in 1000 births (Morley 17).

-for Introduction to Linguistics

“Guatemala has endured its share of hard times; tumultuous times brought on by the domination of its military throughout the twentieth century—with heavy hostility especially towards the state’s indigenous people—brought heavy distrust and instability to the country. The country deals with many internal problems, leaving little time or resource for strong foreign policy.”

-for Introduction to World Politics
APPENDIX K

EXAMPLES OF BETH’S ONE-SIDED WRITING
Appendix K

Excerpts/Examples of Beth’s One-Sided Writing

“To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children, to earn the appreciation of honest critics... This is to have succeeded’ [Emerson]... I would love to live up to that idea. According to this quote, any small thing can make someone else’s day... Compliments, praise, affirmation, and recognition are all easy to do but would make someone else’s day better.”

-for Management Principles

“In the article ‘Solving Real-Life Railroad Blocking Problems’ the authors describe a problem facing most large railroads and offer a solution for it. Summarizing and critiquing the article will help to show its worth in the field of operations research... I had to read the algorithm processes more than once in order to fully understand, but I attribute this to my limited experience with sophisticated operations research studies.”

-for Operations Management

“Both the Gods Must Be Crazy and 10 Canoes incorporate the idea of naturalizing through the way that indigenous people are portrayed; however, the naturalizing that occurs in The Gods Must Be Crazy is more extreme than that of 10 Canoes.”

-for World Cinema

“Someday, I would like to hold a position in the field of accounting. As of now, I do not know anything more specific than that, except that I do want to be in contact with people. I am looking into the different job environments that I could end up in, but I had not yet decided what would be best suited for me.”

-for Management Principles
APPENDIX I

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PORTFOLIOS
Appendix L

An Overview of the Portfolios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Papers</th>
<th>One-Sided Papers</th>
<th>“They Say/ I Say” Papers</th>
<th>Percentage of “They Say/I Say” Papers Devoted to “I Say” &amp; Support</th>
<th>Percentage of All Portfolio Papers Devoted to “I Say” &amp; Support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>Madison</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


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Schorn, S. E. (2006). A lot like us, but more so: Listening to writing faculty across the


