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Bodily discourses: When students write about sexual abuse, physical abuse, and eating disorders in the composition classroom

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Bodily discourses: When students write about sexual abuse, physical abuse, and eating disorders in the composition classroom

Abstract
This dissertation analyzes student texts about bodily violence written for Freshman English and advanced writing courses at the University of New Hampshire between 1994 and 1996. All the volunteers were white women, most aged 18-21. The project addresses four central questions: Why are students writing about these experiences? How are they writing about them? What assumptions inform teachers’ responses to such essays? What larger cultural contexts shape how such experiences are represented and understood by students and teachers?

The primary materials are twenty-five student essays; interviews with students, teachers, and campus personnel; and observations of classrooms and staff meetings. Information was gathered and interpreted using qualitative methods—context-sensitive textual analysis, case study, and classroom ethnography. Engaging the theories of Sandra Bartky, Susan Bordo, Erving Goffman, Alison Jaggar, Peter Stearns, and Lynn Worsham, the study situates students’ essays within cultural, historical, gendered, and pedagogical contexts, emphasizing how “emotion” is constructed and deployed within power relations.

This dissertation begins with what compositionists assume about students writing about sexual/physical abuse and eating disorders. They fear that students expect a therapeutic relationship. In addition, such violence is believed to produce psychological disorders, leading some compositionists to assume students only write about these experiences in egocentric, non-academic ways. Some compositions also often assume these essays are primarily solicited from expressivist pedagogies.

On the contrary, this study argues students write about these issues across a spectrum of composition pedagogies, adopting multiple genres, arguments, and academic interpretations to structure quite public and often intellectually and rhetorically complex essays. Some students may seek the traditional function of college writing to become part of middle class culture where a unified sense of identity connotes power and authority which have been denied them. Far from seeking a therapeutic relationship with teachers, some students may assume the relative anonymity of the university offers strategies for emotional control and less criticism of emotional intensity. However, these students also implicitly challenge the university’s separation of emotion/reason, private/public, normal/deviant. Thus they disrupt power relations and dialectically build social criticism from their “outlaw emotions,” challenging composition theories.

Keywords
Language, Rhetoric and Composition, Women’s Studies, Education, Language and Literature

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BODILY DISCOURSES:
WHEN STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE, PHYSICAL ABUSE, AND EATING DISORDERS IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

BY

MICHELLE MARIE PAYNE
BA, Miami University, 1987
MA, Florida State University, 1990

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

September, 1997
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

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Paula Salvio, Assistant Professor of Education

29 July 1997
Date
DEDICATION

To the students whose work has guided me and the students who will continue to remember their battered bodies through language.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 1993 after I had completed my doctoral exams, I ruffled through the scraps of paper in the manilla folder I had labelled "Dissertation Ideas" in hopes of discovering a subject that compelled and intrigued me enough that I could live with it for a few years. I passed over the yellow page with "sexual abuse essays" scribbled on it. Instead, I began a more general bibliographic search on writing and madness, then turned to issues of student resistance and apathy. While these both engaged my curiosity, I still felt ambivalent. One day as I was talking with one of my professors, Cindy Gannett, I expressed some despair that I couldn't focus on a subject—and I was running out of time. "Michelle," she said, "you can't see it right now, but you will. It's clear to many of us, and when you're ready it will seem so obvious." Later that day my husband, also a composition doctoral student, said the same thing.

I knew I was resisting the subject of abuse as a research project. Having already written and presented research on students' sexual abuse essays, I wasn't sure I wanted my sense of identity wrapped up in issues of bodily violence—I had struggled for several years to conceive of myself as more than a survivor or a victim, and to focus my professional identity around these issues seemed too... narrow? dangerous? Whatever the reason, I was reluctant to pursue this study. Not until I began wondering about the historical discourses that "populate" the ways of writing about abuse and eating disorders (sparked by Bahktin) did I seriously consider proposing this study. Abigail Abbot Bailey's memoirs and the current theories on discourse, power, and the teaching of writing all prompted me to "see" this project in ways I had not before. And so I was ready. I could not have imagined
how fulfilling, engaging, and powerful this project would become, nor how much I would learn (and continue to learn) from the students and teachers who were so willing to participate.

The writing staff at the University of New Hampshire was eager to talk with me about my study, and several instructors and teaching assistants gave freely of their time for interviews and informal conversations. They also asked me to present some of my research during a staff meeting, and the discussion we had, as well as the support and encouragement both implied and expressed, were vital to the thinking and writing of this dissertation. I cannot name them all, but I especially thank Bruce Ballenger, Pam Barksdale, Derek Brewer, Leslie Brown, Tim Dansdill, Brock Deither, Sara Dovre, Alice Fogel, Lucinda Garthwaite, Andrea Harkness, Lysa James, Carol Kountz, Jodi Labonte, Tamara Niedzolkowski, Laurie Quinn, Leaf Seligman, Linda Stewart, Barb Tindall, Sue Wheeler, Bronwyn Williams, among many others. They are a talented group of teachers, committed to students, and sensitive to the complex dynamics of writing about such personal issues as bodily violence. I learned much from them and value the relationships we developed while I was at UNH. Many thanks.

I also thank the students who agreed to participate and took hours out of their schedules to talk with me and/or allowed me to observe their classes. I cannot name them, but without them, this project would not have happened. Their courage and insights direct this work, their voices always reminding me to listen.

To the students in my Writing About Female Experience course at Florida State University— their choice of topics to organize that course and the essays of three of those
students made this dissertation conceivable and "visible" to me.

To my closest friends, who helped me untangle ideas, make connections, battle my self-doubt and manage my stress. They helped me care for my body and soul with walks on Long Sands Beach, coffee at the MUB or Cafe Brioche, long talks on the phone, and many hugs and tissues when I needed to cry. To the Dissertation Readyng Group at UNH who read many drafts of chapters and provided deadlines and a sense of community I needed. They were excellent readers, and Dr. Sue Schibanoff a wonderful guide and mentor for us all. My thanks, then, to friends and reading group members: Rick Agran, Jennifer Beard, Greg Bowe, Susan Bradbury Clay, Gay Lynn Crossley, Gretchen DiGeronimo, Molly Doyle, Mary Hallet, Andrea Harkness, Deborah Hodgkins, Elisa Hopkins, Dot Kasik, Carol Keyes, Anne Malone, Erica Olbreicht, Kathe Simons, Lisa Sisco (who read many drafts and helped me make a number of connections), and Lisa Stepanski.

To the librarians at Rye Public Library—Marnie Tracey, Kathleen Teaze, Jennifer Sanborn, Tricia Quinn, Wendy Palmer, Stefania Metalious, Pam Jautaikis. Sharon Holsapple. Susan Brough—who found many articles and books I needed and became such an important community to both me and my husband, their colleague. To the staff at King Library of Miami University, Ohio, and at Dimond Library of UNH. To the secretaries in the English Department at UNH—Tory Poulin, Heather Robbins, and Chris Ransom, all of whom helped over the years in more ways than I can name. Chris in particular, as Graduate Secretary, scheduled all my meetings answered many of my questions.

To Chuck Anderson, who edited the article version of Chapter 3 to make it more
concise, focused, and organized, and who convinced me (along with Marian McCurdy), to publish with their text and get the rest of my work out. Chuck has been a tremendous mentor. To Irene Heisenberg, who helped me find the strength and confidence to continue this work. To my brother Michael who coaxed us into buying mountain bikes and thus helped us stay sane. That bike took me all through York and Ogunquit, Maine, most mornings before I began to write, keeping me focused, centered, and aware of the coastal beauty I could so easily forget. To my sister-in-law, Brenda, and my nephew, Tyler, who opened their home to me and my husband for a few months during my Dissertation Fellowship year. Tyler reminded me to wonder and imagine. And to Delbert and Norma Barrett, my mother and father-in-law, who also opened their home for us during that year and gave me a desk in their plumbing office on which to write. They also cared for me after back surgery and a long bout with debilitating pain that derailed this dissertation for over a year. Because of them, my husband, and my friends (especially Dot Kasik who taught my class for me), I was able to recover and "learn to use language again," as Elaine Scarry says, recreating myself after physical pain sapped my sense of language from me.

I want also to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Patricia Sullivan, my director, spent a number of hours talking with, encouraging, and prompting me, all with patience and in the midst of being the Director of Composition. Her enthusiasm for this project and her confidence in me seemed never to waver from the first time I suggested it as a project for her Research Methods seminar. Dr. Thomas Newkirk also offered great support and encouraging feedback, telling me after each chapter to just keep writing. In one of his seminars on the Roots of the Composing Process I wrote about my own sense of authority.
as a teacher and writer and how it has been affected by my own experiences with abuse. Dr. Melody Graulich responded copiously to my work, on many levels, and was one of many who suggested I also write from my own experiences with these subjects. In her seminar on Marriage in American Literature I first wrote about Zelda Fitzgerald's struggle with anorexia, an essay that prepared me for this dissertation. Dr. Cindy Gannett talked with me many hours over coffee or a meal (once at Christmas and during a family gathering!) asking provoking questions and guiding me to books she then let me borrow. Sometimes just the touch of her hand on my arm when I came to see her was enough to comfort me, whether I was anxious or, when my disc had herniated, when I was in excruciating pain. And it was in her seminar on journal writing that I first read an excerpt of Abigail Abbot Bailey's memoirs, which later became a large portion of Chapter 3. Dr. Paula Salvio also met many hours with me in her office, responding to drafts, offering insights and texts, plying me with questions, and leaving me with so much more to think about. All of these mentors' voices permeate this dissertation and helped make it possible for me to write it in a supportive, challenging environment.

The Graduate School at UNH also deserves thanks for honoring me with a Summer Fellowship in 1993 and a Dissertation Fellowship in 1994, both of which made it possible for me to conduct my classroom research and write without the demands of teaching. It was quite a gift of time and money.

To my parents, Tom and Marilyn, whose emotional support throughout my years in graduate school has been so important. They, too, never wavered in their confidence, and told me many times that the work I was doing was significant and they knew I would
do it well. From them and my family's religious traditions I learned the values of stewardship, of using my talents and interests responsibly to affect my community, of seeing a project through, no matter how difficult, and of living and speaking my values, no matter how unpopular or criticized. They continually remind me that I can do anything.

My younger brothers, Michael and Aaron, have taught me to have fun along the way, and they never let me forget they loved me. From Aaron's experience as an infant and toddler in surgery rooms and hospital beds I learned early about the possibility of death and the joy of life, as well as about compassion, the ravages of pain, and the healing power of listening.

And lastly, to my husband, Steve Barrett, who was able to give me the most critical feedback of anyone, challenging me to articulate my ideas more clearly, to be more bold in my arguments, to take myself and my material more seriously. So many nights our walks around Nubble Road in York Beach, Maine, were consumed with talks of both our dissertations, our dialogue enriching each other's perspectives, making connections between our projects that surprised and, at times, disconcerted us. More than anyone he has been vital to the development of my ideas, and his faith and encouragement has been consistent and loving. He, too, taught me about balance, and the marriage we recreated in the midst of graduate school is a testament to our abilities to support, nurture, and care for each other first, trusting our work will get done after we have nourished our relationship and our needs for solitude and distance. I cannot imagine my professional and writing life without him as a colleague, friend, and critical reader, nor my life in general without him as a lover and partner.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**DEDICATION** ................................................................. iv

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ...................................................... v

**ABSTRACT** ................................................................... viii

## CHAPTER PAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. FIGURING</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm Not a Therapist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Weepy World of Confessions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourses on Emotion in Composition Studies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the Body: Theoretical Contexts</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Approach to Studying Student Essays About Bodily Violence</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. BEYOND CONFESSION: WHY THE WRITING CLASSROOM?</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normalizing Stigmas, Confessing Sins?</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Safety of Strangers</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. A STRANGE UNACCOUNTABLE SOMETHING: HISTORICIZING SEXUAL ABUSE ESSAYS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogic Violence</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Wanton and Uncivill Carridges&quot;</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I Endeavored to Console My Afflicted Heart With My Pen&quot;</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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ABSTRACT

BODILY DISCOURSES:
WHEN STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE
PHYSICAL ABUSE, AND EATING DISORDERS
IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

Michelle Marie Payne

University of New Hampshire, September, 1997

This dissertation analyzes student texts about bodily violence written for Freshman English and advanced writing courses at the University of New Hampshire between 1994 and 1996. All the volunteers were white women, most aged 18-21. The project addresses four central questions: Why are students writing about these experiences? How are they writing about them? What assumptions inform teachers’ responses to such essays? What larger cultural contexts shape how such experiences are represented and understood by students and teachers?

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This dissertation begins with what compositionists assume about students writing
about sexual/physical abuse and eating disorders. They fear that students expect a therapeutic relationship. In addition, such violence is believed to produce psychological disorders, leading some compositionists to assume students only write about these experiences in egocentric, non-academic ways. Some compositionists also often assume these essays are primarily solicited from expressivist pedagogies.

On the contrary, this study argues students write about these issues across a spectrum of composition pedagogies, adopting multiple genres, arguments, and academic interpretations to structure quite public and often intellectually and rhetorically complex essays. Some students may seek the traditional function of college writing to become part of middle class culture where a unified sense of identity connotes power and authority which have been denied them. Far from seeking a therapeutic relationship with teachers, some students may assume the relative anonymity of the university offers strategies for emotional control and less criticism of emotional intensity. However, these students also implicitly challenge the university's separation of emotion/reason, private/public, normal/deviant. Thus they disrupt power relations and dialectically build social criticism from their "outlaw emotions," challenging composition theories.
CHAPTER 1

FIGURING

Eighteen year old Marcia is an energetic college student. Her tomboyish good looks and vivacious personality give her the appearance of someone whose life is perfect. But, Marcia's life has not always been this good. In fact, everyday Marcia must grapple with the emotions that consume her because when Marcia was 15, she was sexually abused.

Stephanie, student
"A Moment of Abuse: A Lifetime of Affects." course essay

"Being a woman is a dangerous thing to be." So says feminist performing artist Terry Galloway. And I agree. Womyn are exploited in our sexist media, disregarded in a male-controlled labor market, and relegated the status of an incubator in patriarchal religions. Furthermore, womyn are victimized: molested as children, battered as wives, and raped as adults. Our bodies are not our own, and that is frightening, our lives are at the mercy (whim) of men, and that is dangerous. As a woman, the issues I must confront on a daily basis—the reality of discrimination as well as the very real possibility of abuse—force me to expend a great deal of emotional energy on sheer survival. Energy that could be better spent enriching myself. Certainly, I do grant myself some "selfish" time free of these culturally imposed constraints, just not as much time as I should be able to. But my increased awareness of womyn's issues, especially violence against womyn, is an ultimately empowering knowledge, for I can study and question the male role in the perpetuation of such violence, developing informed opinions and strengthening the foundations of my womynhood.

Rape provided the catalyst. My rape or rather, my stepbrother's rape of me. No longer could I skip along, merrily ignorant, tenaciously clinging to those oh so false notions about the who, what, why, how, and wherefore's of rape. . . .

Allison, student
"Unjustified." course essay

About a week ago a few friends of mine and I were walking down Main Street when we passed an extremely thin girl who was pretty but kind of sickly looking.

"Look how skinny that girl is. What I would do to be that thin!" said Hillary, one of the thinnest girls I know.
"Hill, you are already so tiny. Anyway, she is too thin. She's probably anorexic or bulimic. You don't want to be sick just to be thin" Lindsay, the rational feminist of the group chimed in.

"I wish I could make myself bulimic or anorexic so I could be thinner" Kristen, my friend who is an average size replied.

I was stunned. How could someone want a disease that causes so much pain, that forces you to lie to everyone, including yourself and becomes the focus of your life? I wanted to tell her how awful a thing that was to wish for and why. To explain to her what a torture it was to have an eating disorder and how it consumes you and becomes the most important thing in your life. I wanted to tell her these things, but I couldn't. I couldn't share something that I have kept hidden for so long.

Karen, student

"Wrong Wishes." course essay

In our generation today, I feel that many females experience an eating disorder at some point in their life. It's my belief that the reason why women are so concerned with their weight is insecurity, men, and society. Women strive too much to make themselves resemble the models they see in magazines and on television. It is believed in women's minds that being thin is what beauty is all about. Some women lose weight to either impress men or to fit in a tight dress. I think females are so obsessed with losing weight that they either starve themselves or purge after eating. These diseases are known as being anorexic or bulimic. Throughout my life I have dealt with the disease bulimia.

Linda, student

"My Eating Disorder." course essay

I'm Not a Therapist

A teaching assistant sits across from me in my office, describing her concern about a female student who has written a draft about the sexual abuse she suffered as a child. In the process of reading this draft aloud to her peer group, the young woman had begun to cry and decided to leave the classroom. The teaching assistant has come to me because the Director of Composition told her I was focusing on such writing in my dissertation, and I might be able to advise her.

"We talked about it before class. I wanted to be sure she understood what she was doing if she took the draft to a more public audience. We talked about the difference
between writing that is private and for the self and writing that is more public. She’s been in therapy for several years and felt she was ready to do this. I told her it took courage just to write it down and she needn’t feel like she had to share it in a more public way. I was concerned, but I didn’t want to tell her not to read the paper because I didn’t want to imply that the abuse was something to be ashamed of and kept secret.

"I'm not a therapist. I don't feel qualified to deal with this, but I don't want to shut her out and tell her never to bring it up again. I mean, how do I respond to a paper like this? Ask her to go into more detail in this paragraph? That doesn't seem right. I can't deal with the paper as a piece of writing. I don't want to hurt her in any way. I'm concerned about her fragility."

Like many of the other teachers I have talked with, Jodi is expressing the dissonance such papers create for composition teachers, the questions they raise about what it is we do when we teach writing in the university. Papers about bodily violence—what I'm defining here as physical or sexual abuse and eating disorders—seem to blur the distinctions between roles as writing teachers and the roles of therapists. They seem to force teachers to define more clearly what they aren't, what issues they are not "trained" to deal with, where the boundaries are between their emotional lives and those of their students. But, because an issue like sexual abuse is also part of an evolving critique of gender and violence in our culture, and because writing teachers often identify their task as related to, if not defined as, social critique and change, this student's paper creates tension between what have been constructed as competing purposes—valuing the experiences of marginalized people and respecting the personal and private. As Jodi said to me, if she
asks the student to write only privately about this issue—or not to write at all—to what extent will she then be participating in what feminists and psychotherapists in particular have termed a "conspiracy of silence" that, historically, has condoned systematic violence against women (and men)? And yet, if she supports the student's desire to talk publicly about it, is she possibly subjecting the student to further exploitation—from fellow students, for example, who might shame her by dismissing her experience or not believing it, or from the teacher him/herself who might unwittingly silence her with criticism or who might take advantage of a perceived vulnerability? Jodi's question about how to respond, then, is a rather complicated one about how power is deployed in American culture, particularly in terms of what role writing teachers can play in supporting or critiquing dominant power structures or in wielding power themselves.

As we talk I listen to Jodi's concerns within the context of the dozens of interviews I have had in the last several months with the rest of the writing staff, realizing that her anxiety is probably amplified by feeling as if she is alone in her questions, her concerns, her sense of responsibility to her students. To find that she is not alone seems a tremendous source of relief for her, and I make a mental note: why, despite the fact that most of her colleagues have received such papers, has the extensive mentoring network here not integrated these issues into their community discourse? Why are students and teachers alike still isolated from each other when such topics appear in student drafts? It is as if the subject itself is so private, so bound to the privatized space of their offices, that it emerges only when a teacher ventures to "break the silence" to talk with other teachers or the Director. It seems a curious re-enactment of the "conspiracy of silence" surrounding
these abuses in the culture at large. While many of the teachers I talked with reassessed
their roles and their pedagogy in light of such student essays, the issues Jodi raises seem
rarely to become part of the community knowledge-building so common in a staff who
frequently talks about teaching writing in meetings and in the hallways.

Such questions about how writing teachers define their roles also lead to questions
about what relationship writing has to the "self" and to what extent form can be separated
from content. In wondering about how to comment on this student's draft, Jodi, like other
teachers I've talked with, is concerned that focusing on style, genre, argument, or detail
may be interpreted as insensitivity to the emotional and often traumatic experience the
content may describe. Consequently, the student may feel dismissed, silenced, not listened
to. The assumption here is that the written product is intimately connected to the student's
sense of self in a way that makes her more vulnerable than she would be if she wrote about
a sports event or a trip to the mountains. Subjects like abuse, suicide, death, divorce, all
are perceived as more closely connected to a private, more vulnerable sense of self, a self
that some believe does not belong in a writing class. To address textual features like
structure in a written piece on these issues is presumably to examine the non-emotional, the
abstract, the impersonal. It is, in effect, to examine the ways writers control a paper's
content, its unruly tendencies, its tangents, its vulnerabilities. To ignore them is to ignore. it
seems here, one of the objects of a writing course—to teach such means of controlling one's
language, defining the boundaries of communication, making conscious choices about
content. Is our anxiety about responding to such "revealing" papers born out of an
impulse. a socially inscribed impulse. to pass on the means of control. to discipline. in the
terms Foucault uses, the unruly and the emotional?

The concerns Jodi expresses, then, about how to respond to a student and her paper about abuse are not merely "practical" nor merely "theoretical"—they have emerged from the often unstable tensions between theory and practice and indicate how much we might learn about the teaching of writing and about theories of language, self, culture, and power from students who write about such private issues. How these students and their writing can "interrogate" (to use a term not often applied to students or their essays) composition and critical theory is one of the more significant reasons why I have chosen to study student texts that address bodily violence, whether self-inflicted or inflicted by another. Our assumptions about and responses to these texts, their subjects, and the pedagogy they are situated in, suggest much about how we define what we are about in the writing classroom and the possibly conflicting theoretical assumptions that guide our work. At the same time, I would argue, the student texts themselves have much to teach us about these issues—and about how students use writing in the academy to manage their identities, to bear witness to trauma, to negotiate the ways of knowing privileged in the university and those less privileged beyond it.

Although subjects about bodily violence are not the only ones that might make writing teachers uncomfortable, I have chosen to focus on them in this study because they also address ongoing discussions of "writing the body" within literary theory, philosophy, feminism, and cultural studies. What does it mean when a student tries to "shelter [her] battered body in language" (to borrow from Karen Remmler's title) in a composition course? Most of the writing and analysis that has focused on "the body" has taken it up as
a theoretical/philosophical issue, particularly in terms of literary texts or the material of popular culture, rarely focusing on people who write explicitly about their bodies in non-privileged genres like student writing. A growing number of scholars have begun to study the texts produced by survivors of trauma, particularly those of the Holocaust, wars, and most recently domestic violence.\(^1\) Missing from many of these discussions, however, are the unique dynamics of the reader/writer relationship as it is constructed in universities, as well as what it means to write to such a narrow audience (not for popular consumption through print, media, or computer publication) of people who might not choose to read about bodily violence outside of school. The institutional role of writing instruction, the very different rhetorical context within which people might choose to write about their bodies, pose additional questions about "writing the body," subjectivity, language, and power.

This Weepy World of Confessions

Marcia is excited about visiting her uncle. She thinks her mother doesn't want her to go. Sure. Marcia knows her uncle was an alcoholic, but when she had seen him three years before, he had been fine. Marcia is certain he hasn't gone "back to the bottle."

But he has, and though Marcia knows he is drinking, it seems only in moderate form. Marcia doesn't think she will have a problem handling it for a week. However, her visit doesn't even last two days.

Marcia's uncle obviously misses his wife. He constantly tells Marcia how much she looks like her aunt, and how beautiful she is. He offers Marcia his wife's wardrobe, which he has kept. He suggests taking Marcia to her aunt's hairdresser, to have her hair styled in the same fashion as her aunt's. And that evening, he molest her.

Stephanie, 1990, college sophomore

When Stephanie handed me this third-person account about being molested by her uncle, she was not the only one in the class to do so—two other women handed me drafts whose primary focus was about a family member who had either raped or molested them.
That was over six years ago. I was in my second year as a teaching assistant and Masters student and I created a course whose focus was "Writing About Female Experience." Like the other courses I had taught up to that point, I designed this one as an investigation of the subject, a sustained class project that, through a sequence of assignments, asked students to write about that seemingly nebulous topic, "female experience." Starting from their own experiences and engaging the ideas and experiences of other writers and classmates, each assignment asked them to consider this "subject" from vastly different perspectives and then begin to draw some conclusions about what "female experience" means. The students chose the specific subjects they wanted to focus on, like marriage, sexuality, independence/dependence, and I then organized readings and assignments around those interests.

In early 1990 before "PC" was even a term, let alone a weapon used to silence discussion about such issues, the twenty-seven women and one man in the class didn't hesitate to argue with one another, to see class discussion as a way to think through, define, and pursue the implications of their ideas and what all this might mean for their writing. The course was based on a view of language and knowledge as dialectical and social, as contingent, as implicated in the ways we understand ourselves and others, as part of the process of constructing realities. Before the professional debate about "personal writing" heated up (or at least before I was aware of it), I expected and received student writing that situated the personal within larger discourses, that managed a kind of critical dialogue between "self" and "other," and that illustrated how each was implicated in the other.

Thus I have been more than surprised to hear the kinds of assumptions that
colleagues often make when talking about students who write about such private and personal matters as being raped: in both private conversations and many professional texts, such essays are used as examples of some of the fundamental blindnesses of "expressivist" pedagogies. And in spite of my efforts to talk about these kinds of essays in different theoretical and pedagogical terms, I am consistently confronted with (often dismissive) arguments that students writing about their personal lives is ideologically suspect, part of bourgeois sentimentalism and individuality, and more appropriate in a therapist or psychoanalyst's office, not a writing classroom (this last claim often made while also condemning psychotherapy as a mechanism of middle class ideology).

The ideological debates about personal writing—how we define "personal," "emotional," or "expressive" writing and its purpose in the university—have preoccupied compositionists for quite a while now, and I think we need to consider why the field has become so concerned about these terms, what they mean, and what role they play in the writing classroom. In anthropological terms these disciplinary debates constitute a "discourse on emotion," a way of talking about emotion rather than from emotion (as our students arguably do in papers about abuse or disordered eating). In the West, emotions have been defined as "psychobiological processes" (feelings or sensations) that are interpreted cognitively—a racing heart and burning cheeks connoting anger, a blush suggesting embarrassment: "The apparently individual and involuntary character of our emotional experience is often taken as evidence that emotions are presocial, instinctive responses, determined by our biological constitution" (Jaggar 150). To locate emotion in the (passive, weak, gendered) body is to exclude it from cultural analysis, to see neither the
body nor emotions as culturally produced and disciplined. To do so not only essentializes them, it universalizes emotions, and anthropology has demonstrated that cultures conceive of and deploy emotions quite differently, some having emotions not understood in the West. The consequences of constructing emotions in these ways are that 1) emotions are viewed as "least amenable to sociocultural analysis" (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1), disconnected from ideology, and thus accessible only through introspection; 2) the meanings and expressions of certain emotions are universalized; and 3) emotions can be taken for granted (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 3).

Anthropologists like Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod have begun to study emotion not only as "informed by cultural themes and values," but as "phenomena . . . in social interaction." They observe the way emotion as a discourse serves as an operator in a contentious field of social activity, how it affects a social field, and how it can serve as an idiom for communicating, not even necessarily about feelings but about such diverse matters as social conflict, . . . gender roles. . . . or the nature of the ideal or deviant person. (11)

In American discourse, emotion has been gendered and talked about in terms of control, a construction of emotion as weak, dangerous, and irrational, and thus those who can transcend or control it are considered more powerful than those who cannot.

A "paradox of will" seems consistently to attend dominating relationships—whether those of gender, race, or class—as the subordinate other is ideologically painted as weak (so as to need protection or discipline) and yet periodically as threatening to break the ideological boundary in riot or hysteria . . . . Given its definition as nature, at least in the West, emotion discourses may be one of the most likely and powerful devices by which domination proceeds. (Lutz 76)

For composition, debates about the role of the personal and emotional in a writing classroom are debates about social control, particularly control of less powerful students.
Students writing about sexual abuse, for example, are constructed as both vulnerable and in need of protection (especially from professors) and yet threatening to the ideological purposes a writing class should support. When critics link personal writing (like writing about bodily violence) with emotion, expressivist pedagogies, and liberal humanist ideology, they may point out how beliefs about emotion support unified and individuated subjectivities, but they seem implicitly to reinforce the belief that emotions are outside culture, untouched by ideology, not subject to critical reflection, able to render people vulnerable.

Discourses on Emotion in Composition Studies

[The] connection between emotional appeals and the humanist subject only occurs because emotion itself has been relegated, by post-Enlightenment social and ideological configurations, to the domestic space of women, the opposite of male rationality... the figure of the domestic woman has served as part of the construction of middle-class individuals... Attacks on the sentimental can apparently be translated simply as attacks on the middle class and thus on an ideology that ought to be questioned. From such a point of view, sentimentality is bad because it is a symptom of class ideology. Students who turn to personal experience as the basis of their arguments ought to be awakened to their unconscious politics.

Suzanne Clark. "Rhetoric, Social Construction, and Gender: Is It Bad to Be Sentimental?"

Of the more recent additions to the personal/academic debate, Lester Faigley's Fragments of Rationality presents some common critiques of expressivist pedagogies, particularly in terms of the "selves" that are being privileged in composition classrooms:

Writing about the self

in college composition might be viewed as part of a much larger technology of confession for the production of truth in Western societies—witness Foucault's description of the frequency of confession in legal, medical, and educational practice as well as in family and love relations and even in the popular media. Foucault argues that this production of truth is deeply embedded within relations of power where teachers are receivers of confessions as part of the institutional exercise of power. (23)
Such power is exercised, Faigley argues, when teachers ask for autobiographical writing, and he uses Coles and Vopat's *What Makes Writing Good* (1985) to illustrate his point. He says that, of the student essays represented there, thirty of them are about personal experiences, 20 are autobiographical, and several of the rest have writing about the writer. What seems to make these essays "good," Faigley argues, is the perception that the writer is being "honest," writing in an "authentic voice," and therefore both writer and text possess "integrity." Autobiographical writing, it is implied, is more "truthful" than non- (120-121).

In illustrating this point, Faigley focuses on an essay by Norma Bennett, a young woman who has written about the difficulties of vacationing—separately—with her divorced parents:

> I have a great deal of sympathy for students like Norma Bennett, who must cope with difficult family situations as well as the pressures of college, but why is writing about potentially embarrassing and painful aspects of one's life considered more honest than, say, the efforts of Joseph Williams's student, Greg Shaefer, who tries to figure out what Thucydides was up to in writing about the Peloponnesian War? (121)

Faigley argues that in defining such painful past experiences as more honest and thus conducive to better writing, teachers are privileging a subject position for the student that asks him/her to turn a prior self into an object of analysis. In the process, they are instructing the student in the "desired subject position she will occupy" (129), one that uses writing to "discover" a unified, coherent, and a-historical, a-cultural self, but that also sets the teacher up as the certifier of truth. As Faigley points out, what the teachers in Coles and Vopat's collection do not explore is the institutional context within which students are revealing such personal issues. As many have argued, a different relation of power is created when a teacher receives an essay from a student that is personal and "revealing": such an essay sets the participants up as confessor and penitent, and the teacher's role...
becomes one of "certifying" the truth of the student's "confession" (130). In defining effective writing as "truth-telling," Faigley argues, writing teachers can imply an ability to distinguish (universal) truth, believing they are empowering students when, arguably, they are exercising institutional power, but more surreptitiously.

Interestingly, when Faigley discusses the role evaluation plays in creating subject positions for students, he does not use the concept of confession to describe "nonpersonal" writing but focuses on Pierre Bourdieu's theories of taste—when a teacher validates a particular view of the world, an "idea," and not a personal revelation, s/he is reinforcing class distinctions, high and low culture. Such a process is still one of certifying truth and exercising power, but personal revelations, it is implied, make a student more vulnerable. Writing about abstractions, history, and "nonpersonal" ideas, it seems, can protect students more (regardless of whether the author constructs his/herself as unified in writing about such subjects). This concept of the personal as that which makes one more vulnerable implies that "direct experience" affects some part of the self that is not purely discursive: is a student less vulnerable when she writes about the shifting and competing notions of truths in historical discourses about sexual abuse (a twentieth-century term) than she is if she also describes what it meant for her "self" to be constructed by those shifting meanings? If all selves are discursive and fragmentary, then on what basis it is determined who is more "vulnerable"? That direct experience, however mediated, is possible? That personal experiences touch an uncontrollable and exploitable emotional core?

A student's vulnerability within the power structures of the university and larger culture is a primary criticism made by Susan Swartzlander, Diana Pace, and Virginia Lee.
Stamler in "The Ethics of Requiring Students to Write about Their Personal Lives." In opening their article, in fact, they use sexual abuse narratives as an example of how university professors are violating their students' privacy under the auspices of teaching writing:

Imagine a university professor asking a student to reveal in class the most intimate details of a childhood trauma like sexual or physical abuse. We would all agree that such behavior would be shockingly unprofessional. And yet, every day in college classrooms and faculty offices across the country, students receive writing assignments requiring inappropriate self-revelation. (B1)

Unfortunately, they say, compositionists only argue about whether personal writing influences how students write academically, ignoring the more important issue, the ethics of personal writing: "When the boundaries between professional and personal are blurred by turning personal revelation into course content, paternalism may thrive in the guise of professional guidance when the professor is male and the student female" (B1). Because those who have been abused, for example, "often have difficulty understanding appropriate limits in relationships" and "allow[ing] themselves to be emotionally vulnerable with others, course requirements that demand self-disclosure can intensify a student's feelings of abuse and powerlessness" (B1). While acknowledging that not all personal writing needs to be foresworn, the authors emphasize that too often autobiographical writing is intrusive, shifts more control over to the teacher, and stirs up memories that students may not be prepared to deal with (especially not with instructors who behave like "frustrated therapists" (B2)).

In arguing against personal writing, Swartzlander, et al also assume that students' painful experiences will only be evoked if they are asked to write directly about themselves, suggesting that a history course studying racial oppression, for example, or a woman's
studies course reading about domestic violence will not also recall memories and emotions.

If such memories and experiences only surfaced when talked about directly, then
repressing memories should make the abused functional and healthy—which the authors
take pains to point out is not the case. This argument is based on a belief that individuals
can be emotionally and ideologically removed from "ideas" or abstractions, that the closer
and more directly one gets to the source of the pain (a core self?), the weaker and more
uncontrollable the thoughts and emotions. And uncontrollable emotions and ideas are not
what writing teachers are trained to deal with—which brings us back to the claim that
writing instruction needs to focus on nonpersonal, cultural, academic issues, keeping the
mind/body, emotion/reason split intact and the disciplines of writing and therapy in their
institutional places.

Although they do not invoke the theoretical understandings of identity that Faigley
does to argue against autobiographical writing, Swartzlander, et al share his concern about
students' vulnerabilities within the institution. Susan Jarrett and other feminist theorists
have raised this concern as well, especially with female students who disclose to a male
professor. What was believed in the 70s would change the oppressions of women and
minorities—speaking out, breaking silences, attending consciousness-raising groups—is now
suspect for the way it may revictimize the victims. While I do share these writers'
concerns, I have to wonder whose interests are being served when we pathologize the
victims of trauma (in the case of this study, those who have been abused or inflict violence
on themselves through starvation and purging), making the effects of their experiences
individual, atomistic, psychological, and destabilizing, and not socially constituted.
ideological, and part of larger oppressive systems. For those who want to critique power relations, particularly the ways romantic, liberal humanist notions of the self have supported dominant and often oppressive ideologies, why reinscribe a liberal humanist self on a victim of oppression and remove the traumatic experience from culture, history, and discourse?

But what is the real issue here? The roles of writing teachers and therapists, the connections between language and trauma, the exercise of power in universities? While these are all crucial questions, what I want to emphasize is that the ethics of autobiographical writing are not an issue because of the assignments, the pedagogy, or the course content. They are an issue because some students have experienced trauma, something that places them outside the "normal" functions of a university. Without the effects of oppression and marginalization, would such writing assignments cause so much anxiety? As Cinthia Gannett points out about criticisms that children might use journals to write about abuse, critics appear to be more concerned that children might be writing about sexual or physical abuse, than about the abuse itself. . . . If some of the student journal entries were uncomfortable for [readers] to read, think how terrifying they must have been to write, and worse, to live. One must ask whose privacy we really protect when we deny students the right to address these topics, and whose interests it serves to maintain the traditional taboo on these subjects. (39)

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'Sentimentality is regularly associated with women's discourse and its history, rhetorical emotion, conventional sympathy and the banality of mass culture, and a certain domestic order governed by middle-class maternalism, which the middle-class paternalism of intellectual institutions would like to condemn or keep in its place.

Suzanne Clark, "Rhetoric. Social Construction, and Gender: Is It Bad to Be Sentimental?"

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At this point students' personal writings have not yet been the subject of much more than arguments about why expressivist pedagogies are dangerous, or to define (however vaguely) the boundaries between writing teachers and therapists (as Swartzlander, et al try to make clear). No matter how frequently students write about these subjects, nor within what pedagogical contexts, they have not warranted extensive study and analysis. Instead, they seem to have served as unexamined tropes not only in composition studies, but within the current cultural debates about victimhood, individual responsibility, and parent-blaming pop-psychology.

As a way to look more closely at how the field has deployed the concepts of the personal and emotional, I want to look at the responses to Carole Deletiner's article, "Crossing Lines," in the November 1992 issue of *College English*, one of the few published essays to explore what happens when students and teachers cross those nebulous lines between their institutionalized roles and write about their lives, painful as they may be. Deletiner describes the painful issues her students write about: One student in her class writes about the effect of his parent's divorce on his sense of the world and his distrust of people; another writes about her father beating her mother; another about being part of a bombing that killed a homeless person. "Do / elicit these personal revelations from students?" Deletiner asks, "Or is it something about the process of writing itself that unleashes the anger and the pain that appear in my students' writing, as well as in my own?" (813-14). As she describes her relationships with each student, Deletiner asks the same kinds of questions Jodi is asking: Am I an effective teacher if I cross the lines between student and teacher? Who benefits from ignoring the feelings and histories of the
students in the classroom? Should I have asked this student about her experience? What are they learning about writing?

"They don't/won't/can't stop writing," she says, (and I don't want them to) and the feelings and the pain drip off the edges of their pages, only stopped by the comments I write where I tell them about my own experiences as an estranged member of a dysfunctional family, a terrified student who never spoke in four years of college, a student now grappling with whether or not I can take another day in graduate school that feels just like the unaccepting home in which I grew up. My fear, rage, and comradeship tumble out onto the margins of their papers in the comments I write to them. This makes some of my colleagues nervous. It even made one cry. (813)

If the "Comment and Response" section of College English is any indication, Deletiner's article seemed to make other people nervous, as well. Kathleen Pfeiffer's response, in particular, questions Deletiner's approaches and the role that "pain" needs to play in the writing classroom. "How does engaging in 'true confessions' help students become better writers or thinkers?" she asks (670). Like Swartzlander, et al, Pfeiffer views the writing classroom as a place to teach students how to "fluently and expressively speak the language of the university" (669), a job where teachers are not therapists. where it is misleading to create the expectation in students that professors are "comrades . . . sharing pain" (669), where "sophisticated communicative ability" (671) is not served by egocentric personal disclosures. Her final paragraph is illustrative of one of the ways particular kinds of emotional writing subjects are talked about in the published forums of composition studies:

Throughout [Ms. Deletiner's] essay, we see powerful influences from the cult of the victim, the ethos of the twelve-step program, the mentality of the chronically dysfunctional. Ms. Deletiner is, in the end, teaching her students something in the classes she describes--but it is not good writing skills. It is not effective communication. It is, in fact, just the opposite. What she teaches in this weepy world of confessions and revelations is a fundamentally egocentric sort of self-absorption. Such teeth-gnashing and soul-baring might help a student recover his
or her lost inner child, but it will do little in the way of developing a sophisticated communicative ability, analytical skills, or a clear-sighted understanding of the world. The purpose of the university is to look out at the world, to wonder at what we see, to understand its meaning and purpose. None of this can be accomplished when a student is taught only to look inward and cry. (671)

Pfeiffer's argument is informed by a long-standing Western philosophical and academic separation of the private and the public, a system of belief where emotion contaminates reason and its exercise, constituting weakness and vulnerability. The question is not whether emotion is served by writing, but whether such emotion is appropriate and functional for learning the language of power, the only language that is "sophisticated," analytical" and "clear-sighted."

In spite of her assertion that we needn't choose between either personal or academic writing, that assignments "which ask students to draw together personal narrative and critical analysis elicit marvelous essays" (670), Pfeiffer figures "emotional" writing as threatening to the purpose of the university, as a "radical destruction of community and communication" (671); it seems, in fact, to be so unrelated to the real work of the academy as to be laughable, worthy of caricature. Such writing is only "valid" (and yet still not valid at all) within the context of popular culture, in twelve-step programs, popular psychological understandings of the inner child, victimization, and dysfunction. It is difficult to read anything other than contempt for this culture in Pfeiffer's response. further emphasizing the implicit hierarchy of high and low culture, the academic and the popular, reason and emotion.

When a student writes, then, about an experience the culture defines as intensely personal and emotional, that essay comes to signify a number of things to writing teachers:
the problematic power relations inherent in institutions, the potential for that power to be exploited, the nebulous purposes of college writing instruction, and the permeable definitions of the role of a writing teacher. In these discussions of such essays is a struggle over meaning—an anxiety about the consequences of those meanings for students, teachers, academia, and culture. This anxiety suggests the extent to which essays about bodily violence are as much about relations of power and knowledge as they are about their writer's "inner child." And, because the experiences they represent become known through the material body, and the body is associated with emotions, the personal, the uncontrollable, these student essays can easily become targets of intense efforts to control and discipline. In composition this is most readily done by claiming Enlightenment rhetoric (sans pathos) as the appropriate realm within which to teach writing, or it is accomplished by linking "sentimentality" (pathos, emotion) with middle class ideology and subjectivities so that, as Suzanne Clark argues, "[a]ttacks on the sentimental can apparently be translated simply as attacks on the middle class and thus on an ideology that ought to be questioned" (104).

While standards for "emotional style" in American culture can certainly be said to serve middle class interests, expressions of emotion do not necessarily conform to prescriptive norms, nor are they limited to particular classes, genders, or races. In the case of students who have experienced bodily violence, the events are traumatic because they so searingly disrupt the individuals' expectations of reality—the materiality of the body and what is done to it transforms reality into shifting signifiers, rendering the individual part of the liminal space between the reality she left (dominant beliefs about the "normal") and the
one she experienced while being abused/abusing herself. From this perspective, these students and their essays challenge postmodern theory, critical pedagogy, and even expressivism, especially in terms of the gendered and anti-emotional exercise of power that these approaches can employ.

While it is not new to argue that university writing courses have served to initiate students into middle-class, capitalist ideologies, it is important to study the responses of students to what has been understood as a "unidirectional, monolithic notion of power" (McNay 133). Students are not simply passive subjects determined by the discourses they encounter, nor do all discourses deploy power negatively. Vikki Bell emphasizes that Foucault distinguishes between "violence, where the possibility of resistance is taken away, and power, the exercise of which is necessary only when there is the possibility of the 'targets' resisting (see, e.g., 1988: 123)" (32). One of my premises, then, is that the writing classroom is a site for the deployment of power through discourse, as well as a site for multiple kinds of resistances. A student who has been sexually or physically violated has experienced powerlessness, but that does not necessarily mean s/he will never resist, or that the writing in a university class will not function as a kind of resistance for him/her. And, while some compositionists would argue that fragmentary, partial texts are one form of resistance to the normalizing processes of dominant academic discourses, the students in my study suggest that given their histories, normalizing discourses can become another place for opposition. Within the university these students are not only struggling to challenge the cultural norms which produced their experiences, but the ways those norms can be reinforced by professors and classmates (even if the professors are committed to
critiquing those norms through less particularized venues).

**Writing the Body: Theoretical Contexts**

Having positioned student writing about bodily violence within the above arguments in composition studies, I want to turn now to how feminist theories about the "body" inform my readings of these student essays. Although feminism developed one of the earliest arguments that the body has become a site for power struggles, culturally and historically produced, Foucault's theories have given them renewed emphasis and raised the questions of essentialism and the viability of a feminist politics. Like some feminists, I am unwilling to grant that there is not any such thing as "man" or "woman" or that biological bodies do not exist as anything other than texts. When I read an essay about a young woman whose boyfriend has trapped her in her dorm room, beating her repeatedly in spite of her orange belt in karate, I am reading about two people who act on the beliefs that there are biological differences between men and women that translate into subordinate power relations, and for whom the pain and blood of the body are quite real. These young women are read as female and their bodies bear the marks of such a reading. As Lois McNay argues,

> It is not necessary to posit a single bodily cause of feminine subordination. Once the female sex has come to connote specific feminine characteristics, this "imaginary signification" produces concrete effects throughout diverse social practices. These concrete effects are not the expression an immutable feminine essence. (128)

If anything, the student essays in my study illustrate the *effects* of essentializing gender and open the possibilities for responding to those effects and the forces that produce them.

The risk of the essentialism argument, however, is that the body as a corporeal...
presence ceases to exist—social practices and discourses become the body, as Susan Bordo points out, "and they—let's face it—look suspiciously more like 'mind' than 'body'" (35).

Bordo's stance on these issues has informed my own reading of these student essays, a position that does not deny biology but is also suspicious of locating truth there.

I view current postmodern theoretical tendencies thoroughly to "textualize" the body... as giving a kind of free, creative rein to meaning at the expense of attention to the body's material locatedness in history, practice, culture. If the body is treated as pure text, subversive, destabilizing elements can be emphasized and freedom and self-determination celebrated; but one is left wondering, is there a body in this text? (38)

Bordo's final question is especially relevant to my own study because if there is no body, then what do we do with pain? with blood and starvation? When students re-present in written form the ways they or someone else have violently forced their bodies into pain, they are certainly "writing their bodies," but in ways that are bounded by and in dialogue with other discourses privileged in the university. The literal text they produce is one of many interpretations of the violence that they might write, influenced by the immediate context, and those many texts will be continually reconstrued (whether they continue to write about it or not). If as Elaine Scarry argues, pain is language destroying (19), then these students are most likely in the process of learning to use language again—or certainly in a different way. Although the perspectives of French feminism inform my readings of these student essays, I do not specifically address issues of language and the libidinal body, or draw extensively on psychanalytic theory. Because sexual/physical abuse and eating disorders have been so pathologized and medicalized in contemporary culture, I have chosen to adopt cultural studies and its (admittedly multiple and conflicting) approaches to interpretation as I read these essays, asking how these students are both written on by
culture and write it.

**An Approach to Studying Student Essays About Bodily Violence**

Given the decades long debate in composition studies about the role of the personal in writing instruction, it might seem as if we've "examined" the issues I raised earlier with considerable theoretical depth, and I certainly am not arguing that we have not. What I am suggesting is that we have not asked these theoretical questions of the texts we are theorizing about; we have not asked, What are these students doing in their writings about what we consider such painful subjects? How are their teachers responding? Why are some students choosing to write about these experiences? What influence might the teacher's pedagogy have on this choice? And what do our responses to these papers suggest about the assumptions we make about emotion, the personal, the private, and language?

In order to explore questions like these, I conducted a study at the University of New Hampshire of students who wrote—unsolicited—about sexual abuse, physical abuse, and eating disorders in their First-Year Writing and Prose Writing courses during the Fall of 1994. Valuing qualitative methods and methodology, I organized my study around case-study, limited ethnography, and context-based textual analysis, proposing the following questions as my guide:

I. Why are students writing about their own sexual/physical abuse and/or eating disorders in English 401 and/or 501?
   A. What effects might classroom dynamics; policies; assignments; conferences; philosophies of language, writing, and teacher-student roles and relationships have on why students write about these issues?
   B. How do psychological and sociological theories inform why they write in this setting?
   C. How might these experiences and writing about them influence the
student's development as a writer?

II. How are students writing about these issues?
   A. What narrative/textual strategies do they employ? What cultural narratives do they engage?
   B. What linguistic or rhetorical moves seem most characteristic of their writing? as related to their sense of "college writing"?
   D. What textual and narrative patterns, if any, emerge from a large number of these papers? Are there common tropes these students use? how are these related to their other writing in the course?
   E. How do they "manage" the emotional aspects of their experiences in their texts? F. How do "outside" sources (various media, books, etc.) influence and/or get integrated into these texts?
   G. How and why do these students revise these particular papers? other papers in the course?

III. What are the larger cultural contexts within which these students are writing about these topics?
   A. How are these issues represented/discussed on campus? through which organizations?
   B. How does the Counseling Center handle these issues?
   C. How are these issues represented in popular culture (TV, movies, self-help books, etc.)?
   D. What are the "prior discourses" (in Bakhtinian terms) that populate the words of these essays? All discourses have histories that influence what can written and how experiences can be understood. I have been wondering what those histories might be for how students write about bodily violence.

At the beginning of the term I wrote a letter to the instructors and teaching assistants who taught these courses, explaining my study and asking them if they would be interested in talking with me about students they might have or have had who wrote about these issues (see Appendix A). If their students were willing to talk with me, I then set up interview times with the student and instructor and asked the student if she (they were all female) would be willing to share her writing with me and allow me to sit in on her class periodically. Thus all the participants were self-selected. Although I designed the interview questions to touch on the issues I was exploring, they were quite open ended, and
interviews were most often free-wheeling conversations where I followed the lead of the teacher or student. I was particularly interested in their assessments of themselves, the knowledge that guided teachers' responses, the understandings teachers and students both had about why the student wrote the essay—in general, how they interpreted my questions and their choices. I was able to observe the classroom work of two students, one for a large part of the semester. Because no one can confidently anticipate who might write about these issues in a course, I could not observe classes from the beginning of the semester, and I can only reconstruct through interviews what may have happened to prompt the student to choose these topics. In order to maintain the privacy of the students I was observing, their classmates only knew that I was studying their class for a research project on teaching, and I was careful not to single the research participant out by always taping/observing her group. Because protecting the privacy and rights of the participants was paramount, regardless of whether they had shared their essays with the class, I was not privy to as much information, arguably, as I might have been otherwise.

The primary material for this study, then, are the student papers and taped interviews with students, teachers, and UNH counselors, as well as my observations of two classrooms, staff meetings, and various campus activities. All of the students who allowed me to study their essays had written them in either the Freshman English course required of all first-year students (only one semester is expected at UNH) or in an advanced writing course (a sophomore level course titled Prose Writing, or the junior/senior level Advanced Writing). Although I had hoped to receive papers written by both men and women, only women gave me their essays. The instructors assured me that men wrote about these
issues, too (fairly frequently, as a matter of fact), but not in the same numbers as the women did. The students, then, all turned out to be white females, all but two of whom were between 18 and 22 (two of them were over 40).

In total, I looked at twenty-five essays: eighteen papers from the fall of 1994, five essays during 1995/96, and I included two essays from students in one of my own classes that were written in the spring of 1990. Ten of those essays focused on sexual abuse (four of which also mentioned physical abuse), three specifically focused on physical abuse (two of which addressed having an eating disorder), and twelve essays explored eating disorders. Seven of the students interviewed with me. It seems significant that only one of the students who wrote about being sexually abused interviewed with me, whereas all three of the students who wrote about physical abuse did and four of the students who wrote about eating disorders. Because decisions about whether to interview someone are so varied (ranging from time conflicts to not wanting to interview), I can only speculate on the significance of those who did not—in the case of the women who wrote about sexual abuse. I imagine talking with a researcher might have been more than they wanted to do, and their choice was as much to protect themselves and their privacy as it was due to the idiosyncrasies of coordinating times. As a result, in the chapter on sexual abuse essays I could only focus on textual and cultural analysis, and the only student voices that are present are those in the essays themselves.

In fact, the kinds of methods I was able to use—textual analysis, case study with interviews, and a combination of case study and limited ethnography—were quite dependent on the choices of students and teachers—and necessarily so. As it turns out,
those choices enabled me to focus the chapters on student essays around both the subjects of the essays and each of the particular methods, resulting in a richly layered and textured set of interpretations. I begin in Chapter 2 to set up some sociological and historical theories that help explain why students might choose to write about these subjects to a classroom of strangers in the university. Then, in the third chapter, "A Strange Unaccountable Something: Historicizing Sexual Abuse Essays" I use textual analysis, the ways students represent and structure arguments about their sexual abuse, focusing particularly on the kinds of discourses they appropriate and the selves they construct. In doing so, I shift the concerns about these essays away from how teachers respond and what these essays suggest about the "failures" of expressivist pedagogies (as some compositionists argue) and focus on the texts themselves. I ask what it might mean for a student to write about her sexual abuse in both critical pedagogy and postmodern classrooms, examining some of the historical discourses about sexual abuse within which students might situate their own texts, and what those historical materials suggest about discourses of power, knowledge, and gender.

Using both textual analysis and case study methods, in Chapter 4, "The Bruises Were Inside of Me: Writing the Hungry Body," I focus on two students who wrote about their eating disorders, building on the way of reading these essays I begin in chapter two and looking more closely at how one teacher responded to a student and how that student revised her text into a researched essay. While still exploring the discourses these students appropriate, their conceptions of "college writing," and the intersections of power, knowledge, and gender. I situate these essays within the common textual patterns eating
disorder essays seem to share as well as the cultural discourses that write or discipline women's bodies. At the same time I pursue the question about response more explicitly by examining what assumptions informed one teacher's reading of a student essay, her comments, and her concerns. In the fifth chapter on physical abuse essays, "Sometimes I Just Want to Beat the Shit Out of You!": Anger and the Making of Knowledge in a Writing Classroom," I present a case study of one student that draws from an ethnography of her Freshman English course, a course that was both epistemic in approach and informed by critical pedagogy. In doing so, I look more closely at issues of pedagogy and the development of a student's writing. In particular, I explore how emotion, rhetoric, and ideology (as well as authority and agency) become central tensions in the class, and how this student's relationship to these tensions shifts as anger prompts critical reflection.
CHAPTER 2

BEYOND CONFESSION:
WHY THE WRITING CLASSROOM?

To [the stigmatized individual's] other troubles [s]he must add that of being simultaneously pushed in several directions by professionals who tell him/her what [s]he should do and feel about what [s]he is and isn't, and this purportedly in his/her own interests.


I begin with the most difficult question this study proposes to explore: why do student write about sexual or physical abuse and eating disorders in a university composition course? As I illustrated in the last chapter, there are a number of different theories, suggesting, for example, that the romantic ideology of expressivist classrooms practically requires writing about such traumatic personal events in order to reinscribe a coherent yet powerless subjectivity in students. In this view, students are invited to play "true confessions," sometimes with their teachers (as Pfeiffer implies), and engage in inappropriate transference, countertransference, and bad therapy. Within this argument, the proliferation in popular culture of confessional forms—talk shows, fiction, tabloids, self-help culture—create discursive space for these kinds of essays to be written, but it is a sensationalized and exploitative forum organized to promote self-absorption, voyeurism, and big profits. Thus these students prostitute themselves and, without fully realizing it (because they are so vulnerable and easily duped), never learn what they need to about
writing in the university.

For those who value students writing about these subjects, the dynamics of conferencing and gender identification more persuasively explain why students choose to share something they may have been trying to understand for years. When one-to-one conferencing on a weekly or biweekly basis is combined with a course focusing on personal writing and a culture more aware of needing to break these taboos, some teachers argue, a trusting relationship develops where a student might feel safe to disclose these experiences (based on the belief that abuse in particular damages the victim's ability to trust and to feel safe). This is even more likely when the instructor is female—because women are usually the victims of these experiences, some instructors have said, and women write about them most frequently, students are more likely to write to a female teacher than a male.* In cases where a woman has been abused by a man, frequently the category "male" takes on the meanings of "perpetrator," so a male teacher might be the last person to whom she would disclose her abuse. Gender identification resonates on many levels here—males are associated with victimization and masculine styles of relating/teaching that value infrequent and non-intimate contact between teacher and student, as well as non-personal writing subjects and styles: females are associated with nurturing, empathy, trust, and feminine styles of teaching that value frequent and intimate contact, personal subjects, and possibly feminist affirmations of breaking such silences as an assertion of power. These arguments figure the act of writing about bodily violence as positive, empowering, and potentially healing within the teacher-student relationship, the student's choice being made consciously from a position of strength, and the (female) teacher's act of listening and

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encouraging a vital element in both personal and social healing. What these arguments do not account for—and what Swartzlander, et al are concerned about—are those students who disclose unconsciously, not from a position of strength but from one of vulnerability and the impulse to self-sabotage (a reenactment of the abuse—see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*). This kind of disclosure involves transference issues that concern some psychotherapists and ground many of the arguments that teachers can, unwittingly, revictimize students. In each of these theories, then, are quite different figurations of vulnerability and power.

All but one of the essays I received for my study were written in courses taught by women, a few of them prompted by specific assignments directing students to write about something personal. Not all were prompted in this way—some came from courses where students chose their own subjects throughout the term, others were sparked by specific readings in the course, like Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* or an excerpt from a short story that detailed a father beating his son (used to discuss the strategy of time expansion). I have no doubt that class readings which address or focus on issues of bodily violence might suggest to students who have been abused or are suffering an eating disorder that they can write about their experiences (this happens frequently. I understand, in Introduction to Women's Studies courses where such violence is explicitly focused on). Such published texts not only bring a "private" and secret issue into the public space of the classroom, they demonstrate the very possibility that such subjects can be written about—in multiple ways—sometimes by survivors who handled well the ordering principles of written discourse. As rhetorical literary models, these readings can introduce various frames for
understanding one's experience of bodily violence—various languages—as well as different positions of authority from which to speak, whether through a fictional voice, first-person memoir, or third-person narrative/analysis.

**Normalizing Stigmas, Confessing Sins?**

There seems no question that the efforts of feminist consciousness-raising in the 60s and 70s affected how subjects like abuse and eating disorders were talked about, written about, represented, and by whom. Historically women have been stigmatized for revealing sexual or physical abuse (by being blamed, for example, or shamed), and since eating disorders have gained national attention, anorexic and bulimic women have been considered aberrations of "normal" womanhood. The organized efforts to publish these women's stories and to understand these abuses from the victim's perspective are part of what Erving Goffman calls the "moral career" of a stigmatized person. Goffman's theories are particularly relevant to this study because they tease out the social and cultural dynamics that seem to influence the ways stigmatized persons construct their identities, as well as how "normals" often operate in relation to them, thus offering one possible explanation for why students write about bodily violence in a university writing course.

Historically describing marks on the body believed to signify a person's "moral status," the word *stigma* has also been associated with other bodily manifestations that at one time signified "holy grace" or a physical disorder (1). It still retains these bodily connotations, but today the term has come to more generally mean some kind of disgrace, "a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap" (3). Goffman emphasizes that what makes certain attributes stigmas are those that conflict with what we expect a particular individual to have.
These expectations are an individual's "virtual social identity" (2-3): while young women are expected to eat much less than young men, for example, they are at least expected to eat; when a young woman starves herself, she disturbs her virtual social identity with her "actual" one and becomes stigmatized (feminists would argue, however, that these women are embodying the contradictions of the virtual social identity of being feminine).

Behaviors and other markers are not inherently stigmas, of course; they are constructed as stigmas within relationships among people, values, and expected social identities. Goffman argues that all individuals in a society hold the same beliefs about identity whether the group would consider them normals or stigmatized, and those considered stigmatized still view themselves as sharing some of the "normal" characteristics in spite of having internalized the devaluation of their stigma. An incest survivor, for example, would still believe she shares "normal" qualities (a desire for love, the ability to have friends, work productively, etc.), even as she has internalized the shame, anger, and feelings of being an outsider, of being "damaged" that the incest produced.

Goffman distinguishes two types of stigma, the discredible and the discrediting. Being sexually or physically abused would be considered a discredible stigma, an experience that the "normals" have defined as deviant but that is not visible. Such an individual can keep the abuse experience secret and maintain the normal identity most people already assume, but once it is revealed, the social relations shift and the stigmatized individual become discredible. It is important to remember that in cases of physical or sexual abuse of women, a woman is stigmatized because she is the victim, not because she has perpetrated a crime. An anorexic body, on the other hand, is visibly different from a
"normal" body and thus the individual is discredited, unable often to choose who sees the stigmatized aspects of her identity. In this case a woman is stigmatized because she is both perpetrator and victim.

Regardless of the kind of stigma one carries, Goffman argues an individual is socialized to manage his or her normal and stigmatized identities in various ways, particularly when interacting with strangers and/or in public. Part of the process involves learning to pass oneself as normal by managing the information one offers about one's "personal identity" (what distinguishes an individual from others and can be brought together to be identified as a biography, for example) (57). "For the individual to have had what is called a shady past," Goffman explains, "is an issue regarding his social identity: the way he handles information about this past is a question of personal identification" (64). Not everyone can pass, of course, but Goffman identifies various strategies for passing, from changing identifying markers like a name to trying to displace a stigma onto another, less damaging one.

What often happens, however, is that an individual is compelled to disclose his or her stigma, which means s/he has to manage not only information about his/her personal identity, but "uneasy social relationships" (100). Goffman identifies a "disclosure etiquette" in this phase, where one "admits his[her] own failing in a matter of fact way, supporting the assumption that those present are above such concerns while preventing them from trapping themselves into showing that they are not" (101). One of the reasons to reveal a disreputable experience is to show that one is "above" passing, a belief that the individual often comes to after forming or becoming part of a group of similarly stigmatized...
people, creating publications and other social activities to educate others.

We could certainly interpret the growing materials about abuse and eating disorders as one stage in the management of these stigmatized identities. Because talk about these issues is prevalent on campus, in the news, on television and in movies, on the radio, few people do not have at least passing knowledge about the various theories on these subjects. And these knowledges, however contradictory they may be, have changed the ways victims and witnesses can now speak. Using the word "survivor" instead of "victim," for example, changes an individual's subject position and offers a set of interpretations that critique dominant ways of stigmatizing abuse experiences.

Goffman might argue, then, that students with these discreditable experiences use the writing classroom as space to become fuller members of their stigmatized groups, adding to the body of knowledge others like them and associated with them have produced. As a disclosure, the writing serves to construct a "well-adjusted" individual who has transcended the shame of his stigma imposed by normals. When a student chooses to write about one of these experiences as a researched essay, a genre most privileged in college classrooms, s/he is managing a spoiled identity with discourses that normalize and make it acceptable for an academic audience. In fact, as I illustrate in the following chapters, many of the students and their essays suggest that normalizing is certainly one of their motivations.

However, Goffman emphasizes that someone who has been stigmatized can never really be accepted by normals. Instead, the person who has disclosed a disgrace is implicitly expected to assume a "phantom normalcy," an identity that accepts the norm but does not demand the full acceptance from normals that other normals might receive. The
stigmatized person must so fully present what the culture defines as normal, Goffman says, "that [s/he] can perform this self in a faultless manner to an edgy audience that is half­watching him[/her] in terms of another show" (122). A young woman who has disclosed her experience with abuse immediately changes the relationships with her teacher and peers because she has disturbed the default assumption that everyone was normal—that is, not abused—and writes about normal subjects. To demand the same acceptance she had when her social identity was viewed as normal is to demand too much. When the stigmatized assumes the role of a well-adjusted normal (I'm cured, I'm emotionally stable, I accept myself and realize I was not to blame/I am beautiful the way I am) and thus doesn't push her acceptance too far, she assures that

the unfairness and pain of having to carry a stigma will never be presented to [normals]; it means that normals will not have to admit to themselves how limited their tactfulness and tolerance is; and it means that normals can remain relatively uncontaminated by intimate contact with the stigmatized, relatively unthreatened in their identity beliefs. (121)

When a student writes, then, about being abused or about starving her own body, she is threatening the relations of power in the classroom and the assumed identities of her audience. She is, in Goffman's terms, presenting the members of her audience with the possibility of their own spoiled identities, their own stigmas that are otherwise concealed by the constructions of normal social identities and deviant ones (repressing these subjects becomes a way to maintain these dichotomies). The fact that many of the students in my study tend to claim they are "cured" or self-accepting now, and often adopt the language of academic study to represent and argue for their own experience, suggests the composition classroom has become, in part, a space for managing a stigmatized identity. 12
The "normalizing" functions of a university writing classroom have been well criticized by a number of compositionists (Susan Miller, Lester Faigley, James Berlin, and so on), and I suspect this function seems even more problematic when abused and eating disordered young women appropriate (make explicit?) this mechanism for inscribing middle-class ideologies. This situation seems more complicated by the role confession seems to play: according to Foucault, the act of confession serves to maintain the separations between the normal and the deviant, requiring the deviant to confess his/her sins and promise to realign him/herself with normals, all before a silent judge who confirms the truth about the confessor's deviance (Foucault 59-63). Panoptical power is internalized so that self-analysis becomes an instrument of maintaining power, with someone like the teacher in a dominant position to verify truth through shaming. Faigley argues that the personal nature of expressivist pedagogies—its expectations that students write about themselves truthfully and honestly—enacts this confessional relationship, producing and maintaining student's inferior status and a teacher's authority, contradicting any efforts such a teacher might believe s/he is making to "free" students (23, 129-131).

But what does confession mean in relation to students who have been victims of abuse and/or suffer from eating disorders? What deviances are they confessing? Certainly in the case of abuse they have been told they are deviant. bad, dirty—the seductress Eve who deserves punishment for her uncontrollable sexuality and threat to masculine values. They have internalized the shame and guilt of being stigmatized, but what have they done that they need to confess? "Many women survivors of incestuous abuse (as well as rape and other forms of abuse)," Vikki Bell argues.
may feel guilty or in some way to blame because they inevitably move within those discourses which hold women at fault in sexual abuse. They may understand themselves through discourses which do not give them any way to articulate the abuse apart from a self-critical "how could I let that happen to me?/ why did I do such and such?" . . . But the confession of the incest survivor is not straightforwardly a confession in Foucault's sense because it is not a confession of one's own guilty deed, even if, due to societal prejudice, the survivor may feel guilty. (102)

In the case of sexual abuse, a survivor's disclosure participates in discourses of sexuality only to the degree that sexual abuse can be considered part of sexual desire. Even then, Bell points out, "it is not the speaker's sexuality that is at the forefront of discussion, but the abuser's" (103). If anything, to avoid such a disclosure, as feminists have pointed out, only protects the abuser and maintains his power over the survivor. In this case, judging an essay about physical or sexual violence as a confession participates in maintaining those discourses which blame the victim and construct women as sexually deviant and threatening.

The term "confession," then, is not appropriate when describing survivors who speak about their abuse. In addition, the relationship between speaker and listener, Bell suggests, is not predicated on "listening to pleasure, as are the confessions to which Foucault refers, but on listening to pain." In this sense the essays do not add to the archives on pleasure. Bell goes on to suggest that when an abused woman shares her experience with feminist workers or researchers, she is not in a power relationship where an authority can affect her in other aspects of her life (103). While such a relation of power does exist in a classroom, I propose that the kinds of truth such a teacher might be validating—the right to be angry, the right to speak, the reassessment of blame and guilt, a critique of cultural systems of gender and power—function as a set of disciplinary truths, to
be sure (as Bell reminds us, feminism is also a disciplinary discourse), but ones that are set in opposition to dominant ideologies. From this perspective, student essays about abuse function as resistance. I would be more concerned if the kinds of truth being validated were ones that reinscribed the woman's essential complicity.

It might be more appropriate to describe student essays on bodily violence as witnessing or testifying to trauma. Such trauma is both physical and discursive because by its very definition trauma is a violent disruption in the order and understanding of one's world—a collapse, if you will, of the barriers constructed between deviant and normal identities, dramatizing the arbitrariness of such distinctions.

An individual is traumatized by a life-threatening event that displaces his or her preconceived notions about the world. Trauma is enacted in a liminal state, outside the bounds of "normal" human experience, and the subject is radically ungrounded. Accurate representations of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event since, by its very definition, trauma lies beyond the bounds of "normal" conception. (Tal 15)

As I will argue in the next chapter, students who have experienced bodily violence have witnessed and suffered a deconstructive reality where signs and signifiers no longer correspond. For some, reality is a deconstructive text; their urge to testify a desire to know what cannot be fully known because it was not conceivable beforehand. In the cases of long-term abuse, when the abused knows no other reality, some might argue the trauma is less severe than when the violence is unexpected, as in the Holocaust or during war. Nonetheless, it's important to understand these essays as witnessing to a postmodern reality—a "wild subject" as Lynn Worsham calls it—where disciplinary power shatters language, reality, and self. If seen as a crisis of truth, as Shoshana Felman describes testimony (6), what would it mean to attend to the truths these students are testifying to?
The Safety of Strangers

According to trauma theorist Kali' Tal, written texts can never quite recreate the traumatic event in such a way to "shatter the reader's individual personal myth" (121), the way an individual accounts for his/her own behavior and life. This response from some readers is similar to what Goffman means by a phantom acceptance and phantom normalcy, and what sociologist Peter Stearns might call a new emotionology of twentieth-century American emotional culture. I turn to Stearns now to explore why students might write about bodily violence before they have established any relationships with their teacher or classmates, something that was true for several of the students I worked with. In doing so I will also be suggesting how these emotion standards are intended to "protect" listeners from the emotional impact of being a witness to a student's trauma.

In *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style*, Stearns argues that around the 1920s a significant change occurred in the "feeling rules" of American culture, "the recommended norms by which people are supposed to shape their emotional expressions and react to the expressions of others" (2). Stearns studied the "prescriptive literature" available during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—their "discourses on emotion"—literature that was directed to middle-class business and professional people. He focuses specifically on the constructions of love, grief, jealousy, anger, and guilt. Thus, as Stearns carefully points out, the claims he makes for the shifts in emotion culture are claims about dominant middle class ideology and its standards for responding to and constructing the meaning of various emotions. How people actually responded is less the focus of his study than how they were expected by others to respond.
and the ways these standards defined class, gender, and race identities (4). At the same
time, he emphasizes the impact emotion standards had on various public policies,
institutions, and relationships, illustrating that a culture's constructions of emotion are
interwoven with its public and private values.

The shift in emotionology from the 19th to the 20th century, Stearns argues, pivots
around each culture's interpretation of emotional intensity. While Victorians were not fond
of excesses in emotion, they believed that passionate feelings had purposes and emotional
"vigor" could be expressed appropriately if one had been taught how to do so: "Many a
tightly dressed, respectable young man or woman could pour out his or her passion with no
sense of contradiction—indeed, their physical rigors could be endured precisely because the
emotional outlets seemed so much more important" (56). By the 20th century, such
emotions like anger, fear, grief, and jealousy were considered too negative and emotions
were termed "good versus bad rather than good versus dangerous-but-useful." Particular
emotions were defined as bad if they felt uncomfortable and or might require others to
respond in some way (96). Internally threatening, "a powder keg, whose charge increased
with each mismanagement" (137), emotions became the targets of a different kind of
repression that contrasted with the new freedoms in dress, sexuality, and manners (95).
The word "cool," Stearns suggests, conveys how twentieth-century individuals were
expected to present themselves, as restrained, laid-back, nonchalant: "Cool has become an
emotional mantle, sheltering the whole personality from emotional excess" (1).15

Strong emotional expression threatened the harmony of groups (like workers) and
worked against individual control (190). Plus, emotions were beginning to be linked to
bodily threats—to health problems like heart disease and ulcers (227). If one seemed to lose control of one's temper, for example, such expression not only affected one's health, but demonstrated an immaturity and individual failing that needed "remediation," as well as a potential threat to job loyalty and "'more authentic' personal relationships" (245, 230, 246). Venting emotions—"identifying and verbalizing" them—was encouraged, but only in particular ways that did not demand response from others (245). Focused on one's own emotional control, a person did not want to feel obligated to respond to someone else's excess emotions; he or she did not want to experience the discomfort of negative feelings from within, let alone from without. "Thus," Stearns argues, "one could be oneself" only so long as one's maturity assured that one's emotions would remain in check and not bother others. . . . Good emotions blurred with bad when excess threatened" (192). And excess meant an unwanted vulnerability (230).

With emotional intensity focused less on familial relations, new outlets emerged that maintained the larger system of protecting others from negative emotions. People were encouraged to attach themselves to objects or buy things to express strong feelings to someone else, creating "surrogate attachment to objects as a means of preventing emotional intensity among people" (274). New media allowed anger, jealousy, and love to be portrayed by actors and not felt by viewers. "People wanted more to witness emotion than to experience it," Stearns notes; "removal from participation, except for an anonymous shout or two, was precisely the point, for active participation would contravene the dominant emotional rules" (281). Within this context it makes sense that therapists and support groups would be appropriate outlets for emotional intensity. "elevat[ing] strangers
to a position of emotional importance simply on the basis of the unavailability of sympathetic others, including, often, friends. The bond might fill the void, but it also testified to the growing distaste for other people's intensities even at times of crisis" (247-8). Strangers became the most likely receivers of emotional intensity because there was no substantive relationship there to "contaminate" with excess as there would be with friends or family.

While even Stearns concedes his analysis of twentieth-century emotional standards (especially those of most recent decades) is tentative, his argument offers another context for understanding why some students may write about their often traumatic experiences within the public institution of the university—in a class full of strangers. Some students will write about these experiences for their first or second essay, long before the teacher and students have had time to develop a relationship that might build trust and risk-taking (this anonymous kind of disclosure is quite different from a familiar one where transference issues are more likely to influence a student's motivation). A few students told me they would rather their classmates know than their friends at home or their family because their words would be less "dangerous" within the classroom. Parents could be protected from feeling responsible for not seeing the signs their daughter was being abused. Abusers could be protected from the law, particularly if the young woman is still sorting through her feelings for her attacker. As Goffman points out, the mask afforded an individual in an anonymous situation lessens the risk that a stigma will affect one's reputation and long-standing relationships (65). Intimates would not have to witness the emotional struggle, embarrassment, and profound uncertainty the young woman is going
through—they would not, in short, get to see any emotional intensity that could make the receiver feel obligated or prompted to judge the young woman as immature and out of control. And, as one woman told me, the writer could worry less that her feelings were being analyzed by a therapist who could "see through" them.17

From this perspective, a student writing about bodily violence in a college course may believe she has a degree of control over what she reveals and how that information is interpreted by a reader—or rather, how her "self" is constructed by others. It may, in fact, be one of the few places she believes she can have this control and where her words, her voice, will effect the least amount of "damage." If a student has been used to teachers commenting only on an essay's structure, grammar, and style, ignoring content, then she might expect her college writing teacher to do the same (as many of my own students initially expect me to do). When you've been socialized through schooling not to expect anyone to attend to the meanings, gaps, and consequences of your essay's subject, then possibly it is not so paradoxical that some students will virtually insert such potentially shocking subjects into a five-paragraph theme structure. Their experience is contained, their emotions controlled and limited by the expectations of the form and the purposes of the course, and they choose what to include and what not. In fact, some of the students I interviewed could clearly articulate what they decided to leave out of their drafts and why—usually it was material they felt was "too personal" or "too psychological," sometimes material they sensed they weren't ready to work through yet.18 And while they felt gratified by the compassion and empathy their peers and teachers would express, some students told me explicitly they did not want "pity" or "sympathy"—they wanted their essays to be treated...
as any other essay in the course. Not all expressed this—some clearly wanted their draft on one of these subjects to be ungraded "venting"—but it was fairly clear these students did not want to disrupt the principle of restrained intensity Stearns describes, either by making their readers feel obligated to respond or by allowing themselves to express emotions that might run out of control.

Students may write about their experiences with bodily violence in part because "strangers"—within the "impersonal nature" of public spaces—have been constructed within American emotional culture as "safe" spaces to express emotional intensity and lack of emotional control. Although many writing teachers assume the student wants a therapeutic relationship with them, some may be counting on a well-defined boundary between writing teacher and therapist. They may not expect a response on the "feeling level" from a teacher because that would contradict the prevailing emotional standards. How teachers and students actually respond in these situations, however, is variable, and the consequences of writing about such emotionally intense experiences may indeed disrupt the emotionology Stearns' describes. The fact that many writing teachers are surprised and concerned when they receive essays about intense personal experiences, and concerned about how best to respond, suggests that some teachers do not perceive themselves in the role of an "appropriate stranger" to whom to express such feelings. Some teachers wonder if the student expects a similar exchange of personal experiences, something that often happens in developing friendships, again illustrating how the receivers of someone else's feelings worries about what it makes him or her responsible for, what it assumes he or she might do in return. And this ambiguity creates even more discomfort.
I've begun to suspect that teachers' discomfort with these subjects may speak to changes in the emotionology Stearns describes, changes influenced by the growing archives of material written by survivors of abuse and eating disorders. At the very least, students who write about these issues to strangers in the university may perceive that their emotions are of little threat there, but given the academy's historical disdain for subjective, emotive discourse, these students are also challenging power relations and dominant epistemologies. As I explore in more detail in the next chapter, the emotions expressed by victims of abuse are often considered what Alison Jaggar calls "outlaw emotions," constructed by dominant culture as "conventionally unacceptable" (160), but from Jaggar's perspective part of the process of revising dominant ideologies. When students express these outlaw emotions in a college essay, the potential exists for developing a "critical social theory" that I would argue, resists the emotionology which helps maintain distinctions between normals and deviants/ emotionally controlled and uncontrolled.
Dear Miss _____,

...You would not realize. I know, how many troubles I have because I try hard to be cheerful and happy. Now my heart is overflowing with grief. I have brought them to Jesus and I know he will make them right for me. I am telling you so that you may understand why I cannot be with you.

I have suffered since childhood my father's abuses. He hates me for what I am. I work for him and obeyed him as much as I can even if they are unjust...yet he says that I am still a slave to him. I am willing to work if he gives me my freedom to do the right thing...This last month father seemed to like me for he was very kind, but no, it didn't last long. He tried to make me sin (emphasis added by MSPCC social worker). I wouldn't do it so he made me promise not to tell anyone, but the week before last mother found out. I told her all. How many tears were shed, I can't say. Father is very angry and hates me worse than ever. He wants revenge and he torments me in every way....Don't you think this is hard? Cruelty cannot seem to rule me. only love can so I disobeyed him last Sunday.

...[He] knocked me about so that my head was in a whirl...He told me he would kill me with a knife, I answered and told him I would be very glad to have him. I was ready to die, I couldn't bear it any longer..."


This excerpt from a letter Grace wrote to her Sunday School teacher is an artifact of resistance and escape. Repeatedly raped and beaten by her father, Grace was the oldest of six children in this Chinese family. Her father consistently tried to isolate her by preventing her from attending Sunday School at a Catholic church, but she was able to write to her Catholic Sunday School teacher and begin the process of leaving her family. Her teacher took her to the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to
Children where her Chinese-American social worker tried to persuade her to return home. In spite of her father's threats, Grace left her family and attended a seminary, having begun this escape from physical and sexual violence by writing. Full of euphemism and asserting the authority her religious beliefs grant her to reject paternal authority (Gordon 236-239), this letter is a rhetorical act with profound personal and public consequences. Grace "used Catholicism as a route to modernization, Americanization, and escape from patriarchy" (Gordon 239), and this letter was her vehicle.

We rarely think about letters like this when it is asserted that sexual abuse has been "unspeakable." Yet court documents, child protection agency files, and even a few memoirs from the early part of American's history illustrate that such abuse has been spoken about, but as feminists have pointed out, in mythologized ways. These textual documents have been used to establish truths about sexual abuse that often maintain patriarchal systems, but at times they also have been used as the means to escape and resistance. Like the texts of the other women I explore in this chapter, Grace's letter demonstrates the rhetorical and emotional skills needed to construct an identity that would be visible to the authority figures she wanted to reach, as well as an awareness of the competing discourses of truth she could appropriate in representing her experience and arguing for her escape. Her letter is part of the prior discourses that have shaped how survivors of sexual violence can write about their experiences, yet rarely do survivors have access to such texts. Often not viewed as legitimate rhetorical or literary works, letters like Grace's seem to have never been written, contributing to the assumption that only in the twentieth century have women "broken silences"—and now that they have, some critics
argue, in fiction and memoir, sexual abuse "is no longer the dirtiest little secret or the most unimaginable act, since we seem to talk about and imagine it all the time" (Roiphe 67). 19

The strong negative reactions some teachers and reviewers have to writings about sexual abuse belie Katie Roiphe's assertion that incest "is no longer shocking" (67). Even Roiphe contradicts herself as she argues that the fadish, predictable, evil father/innocent daughter "tropes" in contemporary fictional representations of incest have "the lifeless feel of feminist textbook": "the incest, no matter how dramatically described, appears to be simply an illustration of a political point" (70). At issue is the function of the incest—artistically it cheapens the fiction, but emotionally it is so threatening to the reader, Roiphe implies, that its real function is exploitation. Even in losing its power to move us, incest also "grabs our attention with very little skill on the part of the writer" (69)—"the situation itself is so extreme" that it doesn't need a writer's talent to make it work. Thus writers use these scenes not for aesthetic or thematic purposes (which it seems incest cannot be employed for), but to sell books, to hold readers, and to put their writing skills on vacation for a while.

Although Roiphe's primary criticism of this fiction is its reliance on a "fad," I don't think the predictability or frequency of the incest theme in literature is the issue here. If the frequency with which a subject appears indicates a "trend" or a "fad," then critics would discount most literature based on the frequency and relative consistency of most plotlines about war, death, violence by men against men, adultery, betrayal and deception. As even Roiphe points out, this theme is as old as storytelling itself. I think the real issue for Roiphe can be found in her explanation of why these plotlines have emerged now: "Sex sells, and
pervasive sex sells more" (71). Thus, to render the act of sexual abuse with such predictable and specific detail is to pander to the "base" desires of readers, not to their sense of literary aesthetics. Writers use scenes of young girls being raped or sexually violated by their fathers to stimulate their readers and sell books. Of course, this begs the question of who is reading these novels—and for what purpose. Are young men reading them for titillation, or young women for sensationalism and the fulfillment of Oedipal fantasies? Are these novels being marketed by highlighting their "pervasive" sexual content? If the "sex sells" argument explains anything, it may describe the motives of publishers, but it only begins to describe one of the motives of writers—and of readers. In focusing on the incest plotline as motivated by and functioning as "sex." Roiphe not only constructs readers simply as voyeurs, finding the fantasy of incest more appealing than the horror of its reality—she implicitly equates the father who stimulates his daughter with the writer who uses such a scene to stimulate (inappropriately) a reader. Anyway you look at it, someone is exploiting someone else, and the bigger crime is that the reader is the victim.

But for Roiphe this stimulation is not simply sexual—it is also emotional. The novels in question force us to "have to feel sympathy, horror, and the breathless panic of the thirteen-year-old being molested by her father" in such a way that we become "resentful in the manner of a Hollywood tearjerker" (71). The issue here is the way textual incest manipulates our emotions and compels us to feel what we don't want to feel. Again, the writer and the text become the offending father/mael to the vulnerable but eager daughter/female/reader. These literary renderings of incest defy emotion standards, in Stearns' terms, and demand evoke a response from readers that might threaten the reader's
own efforts at emotional cool. And it might mean the reader is obligated to respond with action. Roiphe's argument illustrates quite well why many readers tend to critique writing about sexual abuse as emotional/manipulative/exploitative—and why it seems so difficult to focus on the other rhetorical, cultural, and personal functions it can serve. This argument essentially directs our attention away from how terrified, confused, and violated an abused person feels, and, in turning it toward the reader's feelings, elides the fact that abuse occurs.

Pedagogic Violence

Compositionists have also questioned the function of such personal subjects as sexual abuse when written in a writing classroom. In the first chapter I argued that some composition theorists conclude that if a student writes a personally revealing essay in a class, then that class is most likely expressivist—why else would a student choose to write about something so traumatic and private unless s/he has been asked to do so within a pedagogy that values "personal voice," self-reflection, and an uncritical, nonsocial stance towards discourse? As such critics have argued, expressivist pedagogies have affirmed dominant ideologies by emphasizing the discovery of a romantic, humanist self through writing in an "authentic voice" for a teacher whose job it is to affirm these (often) white, privileged, (often) male voices. To make this argument about highly personal writing, however, constructs the personal and the emotional in rather traditional philosophical terms: a personal experience is associated with emotion, an internal, bodily, socially-unmediated response to individual experience that is unstable, irrational, easily exploitable by those who have mastered reason. This understanding of emotion does not account for
the recent anthropological analyses of the term that argue emotion is socially constructed, "an idiom for communicating, not even necessarily about feelings but about such diverse matters as social conflict, . . . gender roles, . . . or the nature of the ideal or deviant person" (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 11). Nonetheless, highly personal student writing has become a trope for arguments against expressivist pedagogies. However, in the research I have done focusing on students who write about bodily violence, I have not found this argument to reflect accurately the motives of students who choose to write about these issues, nor the motives of the teachers who are often surprised and sometimes confounded when they receive such essays. What I have found in the cases of ten students who wrote about their sexual abuse (defined here as rape, incest, or sexual contact deemed inappropriate by the dominant culture) is that they have written about it regardless of the kinds of assignments required in their first-year writing course, regardless of whether the teacher focused on personal or academic essays, or any combination of the two.

Although I cannot draw broad conclusions from my research with only ten students, I can safely argue that their work complicates some of the assumptions often made about painful personal essays and the pedagogies that engender them. Too often it is assumed that someone who has been abused sexually can only write about it as a purely emotional, psychically traumatic experience, a narrative not likely to engage in academic critique in part because few if any autobiographical traditions exist for doing so. In addition, a sexually abused "self" has been constructed as too emotionally vulnerable to sustain appropriate relationships with others (like authority figures) or to engage in "intellectual" work that requires a less vulnerable, more "stable" self. A survivor of rape or
molestation, the argument goes, needs the stabilizing work of therapy to create a self capable of academic work. The abuse and the abuse survivor here are only knowable through this psychotherapeutic discourse, a "strategy of cultural coping" Kali' Tal terms "medicalization" (6). Yet, students and their written texts often disrupt these too simple dichotomies, first by the very act of writing about a private experience in a public genre, and second by doing so with both "rational" and "emotional" rhetorical practices. While some survivors may only feel comfortable writing about their abuse within a class focused on personal essays, they are not necessarily "deterred," as it were, from addressing the issue in a class focused on academic, critical, non-personal genres. In fact, several of these students chose to write about their abuse in a researched essay, a genre traditionally considered academic and public. Plus, over half of them structured their texts to move either implicitly or explicitly, from often hauntingly detailed or powerfully understated narratives of the abuse to analyses of how it has affected their relationships with others and themselves, as well as generalizations about what such abuse suggests to them about families, American culture, gender, and power relations. Clearly these students are not simply looking inward and crying, but are engaging in sophisticated analyses and critiques of the social and institutional contexts within which they live their lives.

Instead of considering their essays as sites to critique expressivism, I want to ask what it might mean for students to write these essays within a classroom informed by postmodern views of the self and how it is socially and historically constituted. This shift in focus might allow us to step away from the binaries (academic versus personal, university versus outside world, therapy versus analytical performance, talk television...
versus intellectual discussion) that dominate arguments between so-called expressivists and their critics and enable us to reconsider what many perceive as the greater stakes in the writing we receive: what constitutes knowledge and subjectivity, and who or what controls the dominant power structures that, through language and identity, perpetuate domination and oppression. I'll begin by situating the student essays I have studied within an historical, cultural, and political context, something a pedagogy like Susan Jarratt's would ask a student to do, "lead[ing] students to see how differences emerging from their texts and discussions have more to do with those contexts than they do with an essential and unarguable individuality" (121). I want to borrow terms from Lynn Worsham ("Emotion and Pedagogic Violence") to distinguish Jarratt's approach from that of other postmodern pedagogies: Arguably Jarratt employs a critical pedagogy, like Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and others who emphasize "experience as the medium through which the conditions of domination and subordination are articulated and resisted" (Worsham 138). Postmodern pedagogy, on the other hand, critiques the "authority of experience" and focuses instead on discourse and ideology as the means of domination and resistance (141). In the last section of this chapter, as I explore in more detail how students employ various discourses to structure narratives and arguments about the "truths" of sexual abuse, I will briefly consider what it might mean for students to write within a postmodern pedagogy that seeks, in Gregory Jay's terms, to "undo the 'subject of certainty'" (Jay 789-90). I will begin, however, with an admittedly brief analysis of how various ways of speaking and writing about sexual abuse have functioned in American culture and been shaped by various forces.
"Wanton and Uncivill Carridges"

Current understandings about sexual abuse come from feminist, psychological and anthropological discourses, in addition to the growing number of autobiographical and fictional narratives of survivors, and each of these discourses is part of the "prior texts" that have shaped how students write about and understand themselves and their experiences of being abused. Although talk about sexual abuse, incest in particular, is not a new phenomenon, how that abuse is talked about, how it is understood and operates in American culture, might appear to be new. The feminist movement that emerged in the 1960s and 70s is often identified as the point at which issues of sexual violence were significantly reinterpreted, analyzed not as "unnatural sexual acts" but as acts of violence supported and created by Western, patriarchal family structures. Women were encouraged to "break the silence" surrounding sexual abuse and thereby begin to disrupt the power structures that maintained the oppression of women. The personal became political, and language was its medium. Since that time, sexual abuse, whether defined as rape, molestation, or incest, seems to have become the topic of everything from the much-reviled TV talk shows to the equally reviled self-help material that lines bookstores, to the focus of what Katie Roiphe argues is the newest and cheapest trope in contemporary American fiction. Autobiographical narratives of sexual abuse, written by the victims themselves, have recently been published, some of them in collections such as *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (1983) and *Voices in the Night: Women Speaking About Incest* (1982). All of this attests to how well women responded to the call to talk about their lives and their stories, to "speak the unspeakable."
Feminist theorists like Judith Hermann (*Father-Daughter Incest*) not only listened to the victims of sexual abuse, but began to formulate theories and therapies from the "subjugated knowledges" of incest survivors (Bell 174). As they emerged simultaneously, accounts of survivors and feminist theories of incest not only opened up "discursive space" for the abused, but added terms to the debates about incest and its meaning that problematized the ways it had historically been interpreted. During the eighteenth century for example, incest was defined as an unnatural sexual act because it was sexual activity outside of marriage and not for procreative purposes; 20th century feminists now argue that this construction obscures the gendered power structures in the family that make incest possible. *How* sexual abuse is interpreted, not only how family and friends respond, but "professionals" of all kinds, constructs the abuse experience itself. It is a constructed category, not simply an act (Bell 179). These interpretations operate to define and discipline sexuality, gender, power relations, and language. When a writer chooses to describe an abusive scene, whether it is fictional or not, s/he steps into, consciously or not, all these contemporary ways of understanding sexual violence, each of which determines what can be said, how, by whom, within what context, and with what evidence. In analyzing the ways of speaking about sexual violence in two historical texts, I hope to propose a way of reading student essays that makes more visible the various discourses employed and thus opens a kind of critical reflection on those discourses and experiences that affects how we read seemingly personal essays and how we understand the terms of the pedagogical and philosophical debates in composition studies.
Some of the earliest accounts of sexual abuse in America date back to the colonial period and are found primarily in court records. These documents functioned to establish a number of "truths" about the alleged incidents to determine if they were "illegal" acts: who the primary actors were, as well as their respective ages, marital status, race and class status; what physical acts occurred; who witnessed the activities. These accounts are therefore quite detailed, often slowly narrating the acts of sexual violence. Take this description from a case in Middlesex, Massachusetts, in 1660, documenting sexual intercourse between seven-year old Elizabeth Stow and Thomas Doublet, a Native American, given by a witness, Mary How, who had been caring for the Stow's baby when this occurred:

Elizabeth Stow says Here comes my man & the Indian says Here is my squa. [While How was getting the baby to sleep] the Indian and Elizabeth went out to the corn field out of her hearing. He laid her down upon her backe and turned up her coats on her face & then put his finger in at the bottom of her belly and then lying upon her did with some other thing hurt her at the bottom of her belly which made her cry Oh Oh but afterward hee let her goe . . . . She [How] hath often seen & observed wanton & uncivill carridges by the aforesaid Elizabeth Stow and hath told her father who corrected her. She found signes of seed upon the childs wombe & some attempt of breaches in entering her body but not very far. (Thompson 74)

Mary How establishes two crucial pieces of evidence to make this case valid under colonial law—her visual observation of the act and of the physical signs of intercourse. Witnesses from the community were heavily relied upon in such cases, particularly midwives who could report physical evidence of an act of sexual intercourse (D'Emilio and Freedman 32). During an attack, if the woman or child did not cry out, she would be considered a willing partner. Calling out only worked, of course, if someone was around to hear the cry. Thus, the validity of a criminal charge was largely dependent on the
testimony of one's neighbors.

In this account, How authorizes her interpretation of what happened within prevailing beliefs about girls' sexuality: in describing Elizabeth's "wanton and uncivill carridges," How casts her in the role of seductress, reflecting the predominant assumption that she is sexually aware at the age of seven and has the qualities of older women—"physically and sexually vulnerable, easily aroused, quick to succumb to flattery" (Ulrich 97). A woman's complicity usually determined whether an act of intercourse was in fact "illegal," and this was largely determined by her connections to males. In cases of rape, court documents from Massachusetts suggest that "single, adult women were often perceived as willing sexual partners": "the death penalty for rape applied only if the woman was married, engaged, or under the age of ten"--if she was, in short, considered the property of another man (D'Emilio and Freedman 31). Elizabeth's subjectivity is thus defined here by her relationship to patriarchal structures.

The result of defining sex as abusive under these conditions meant that the woman was never a "victim." The victim of Doublet's crime, for example, was ultimately not Elizabeth but her father. Because she is believed to be the property of her father, Doublet has violated that property and harmed Mr. Stow. This suggests the extent to which sex crimes were defined as and prosecuted according to gender and power relations. At the same time, these cases were adjudicated along the lines of race and class. The fact that Doublet was Native American made it even more likely he would be convicted and sentenced for this crime. In eighteenth-century Massachusetts, three of the five men actually convicted for having sex with girls under ten were either Native or African-
American. The same was true of rape cases during this period: Although 86% of the men accused of rape were white, three out of the five men executed were Native or African-Americans. The other two were white laborers (D'Emilio and Freedman 31).

During the colonial period then, written accounts of sexual abuse produced for the courts functioned to establish "truths" about the event that supported racial, class, and gender dominance. They established, in a sense, whether a threat to that dominance existed. In this way, certain sexual acts were defined as criminal. Whether gathered from witnesses or the abused themselves, these written accounts were (and still are) used to establish "truths" about sexuality and power. In contrast to the late eighteenth-century memoir I discuss below, these court documents not only defined the legal issue of abuse and limited the role of women in the courtroom, they effectively repressed the "subjugated knowledges" of the abused. No opportunity existed for a sufferer to do what Abigail Abbot Bailey does—to engage prevailing discourses in a written text, to interrogate, interpret, and inform each other and eventually lead to significant social action.

"I Endeavored to Console My Afflicted Heart with My Pen"

In 1815, when Abigail Abbot Bailey died at the home of her son in Bath, New Hampshire, a manuscript was found among her possessions, a document that detailed her emotional and spiritual struggle to understand and eventually leave her abusive and incestuous husband. Spanning the years between 1788 and 1792, this manuscript was woven from her diary and, at the prompting of friends, was eventually published in 1815. edited by the man who had been Abigail's minister during this period. 2500 copies were printed. The Memoirs of Mrs. Abigail Bailey is not the tale of an impoverished or
marginally literate woman—it is the re-membering of a woman from a propertied and educated family, whose father held various political offices in town and was a founding member of the Congregational Church in Coos, New Hampshire (now Haverhill). Her husband, Asa, was also from a family of means and was a prominent figure in town.

Together they had seventeen children. In the course of 26 years of marriage, Asa had an affair with one of their hired women, attempted to rape another, and eventually "withdrew his affections] from the wife of his youth" and focused them on his sixteen-year-old daughter, Phebe. When he began "courting" his daughter, Abigail was well into her fifteenth pregnancy, carrying twins. "For a considerable time," she writes in 1792,

I was wholly at a loss what to think of his conduct, or what his wish or intentions could be. Had such conduct appeared toward any young woman beside his own young daughter, I should have had no question what he intended: but as it now was, I was loth to indulge the least suspicion of base design. . . . All his tender affections were withdrawn from the wife of his youth, the mother of his children. My room was deserted, and left lonely. His care for the rest of his family seemed abandoned, as well as all his attention to his large circle of worldly business. Every thing must lie neglected, while this one daughter engrossed all his attention. (Taves 70-71)

Unlike the case of Elizabeth Stow, the written representation of Phebe Bailey's abuse was never admitted to a court of law nor used to criminalize the violence or the abuser. Written by an intimate witness, her experience is made visible through her mother's private diaries and revised into a potentially public document. At the same time, this narrative was shaped by institutional figures who had an interest in maintaining particular relations of power. Before being published, the manuscript of The Memoirs was surveyed, as it were, by "a minister of the Gospel and . . . another gentleman of public education" (Taves 52) to see whether it should be published. Believing that the public
would be "benefited" by it, these gentlemen agreed and then asked Reverend Ethan Smith, one of Abigail's ministers, to transcribe and edit the text. As Smith admits, he took the liberty to "abridge some pages,—to shorten some sentences,—and to adopt a better word, where the sense designed would evidently be more perspicuous, and more forcibly expressed" (Taves 52). In addition, Smith says he added nothing to the "wickedness or cruelty" of Asa; in fact, in various (unnamed) places he has omitted some of these descriptions "not from the least apprehension of their incorrectness; but to spare the feelings of the reader" (Taves 52). Although these comments suggest Abigail may have been even more specific and direct about Asa's behavior in the earlier draft, the original manuscript does not exist to examine where Smith "improved upon" Abigail's words. The function of this "Advertisement" at the beginning of the published memoirs is to validate Abigail's truthfulness and authority, reinforcing the "proof" of Abigail's piety and devoutness given in the "Introduction" and supported with long passages from Abigail's diaries. In establishing Abigail's piety, the editor maintains a separation of "normal" and "deviant" sexualities, reinforces an image of women as innocent and vulnerable to "the depravity of fallen man," and establishes the appropriate subjectivity of a Christian woman in relation to her God.

At the same time, the "Advertisement" gives readers frames of reference for understanding the purpose of the book and tells them how they should interpret it, as a morality tale and a story of God's grace and mercy:

In her memoirs, the intelligent reader will find, strikingly exhibited, the dreadful depravity of fallen man; the abomination of intrigue and deceit; the horrid cruelty, of which man is capable; the hardness of the way of transgressors; the simplicity of the Christian temper; the safety of confiding in God in the darkest scenes; his
protection of the innocent; the supports afforded by the christian faith when outward means fail; and the wisdom of God in turning headlong the devices of the crafty. . . . These things are presented in a detail of events . . . which are singularly calculated to exhibit the detestable nature and consequences of licentiousness and vice. (52)

Although the narrative suggests more ambivalence than this, Asa is cast in the role of "fallen man" and Abigail in the role of saint, Phebe in the role of innocent victim. Speaking publicly about something so "abominable" as incest was evidently sanctioned by these religious and educated authorities because it was situated within prevailing beliefs about God's grace, the power of prayer to sustain and comfort, the ordering of the world into good and evil. Although Abigail does reinforce these beliefs, her own behaviors cast her as the formidable protector of her family, the one who is able to confront her husband with the consequences of his abuse and demand that he leave. No story of such violence is ever so simple as Smith casts it, and Abigail renders hers with painful complexity.

She begins with her marriage to Asa in 1767 when she was 22. Very quickly she tells us that although Asa was "sometimes unreasonable" she resolved never to return in kind, never to "indulge a revengeful feeling or ill will" (Taves 58). She believed his behavior was rooted in "the depravity of the human heart," not in any lack of affection for her. Within three years Asa has an affair with a young woman and Abigail is devastated. She turns to God for comfort, pleads with Asa to "consider the evil of his ways," and decides to preserve his public reputation by keeping quiet. This will be the pattern of her behavior throughout the memoirs, even in the face of his attempted rape of another woman and his temptation to kill Abigail, until she finally learns how "abominable" his relations were with his own daughter. She loves her husband, believes he can reform if he chooses.
and wants to help him for the sake of his soul and the sanctity of their family. She believes his many promises to change and lives with him for years, in fact, after he seems "reformed," having become a political leader in the town. She repeatedly forgives him, an act that may seem the only power she has.25

Abigail weaves a number of her diary entries with her reflections on this period, and they show her wavering between subtle anger at God for what has happened and then overwhelming remorse and complete trust that God has a plan:

Alas, how is man's nature depraved! so that nothing is too vile for his wicked heart to do! Those, who should be friends, become the worst of enemies. O my soul put not thy trust in man; nor take the present world for thy portion. . . . I behold emptiness and vanity in all things below the sun. . . . Treat is my sorrow. . . . My prayer seems to be shut out from God, as though he regarded not my mourning.

I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me. I will not fear. though the earth be removed. God will, in his own time and way, afford me the best kind of relief. . . .  Wait patiently, therefore, O my soul, wait I say upon the Lord. (Taves 59)

Echoing the words and cadence of biblical text, Abigail willfully tries to both account for these new "tribulations" in her life and to find the comfort she has lost and needs. The tenets of New England Congregationalism provide her with a way of coping with the psychic dissonance created by Asa's behavior and her initial expectations of him. As Clifford Geertz says, suffering, within a religious framework, is not about "how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, how to make of physical pain, personal loss. . . . something bearable, supportable" (104). This is in fact what Abigail realizes right before the incest occurs. She has had a dream that Asa wants to move, to sell their farm, and to take two of their sons with him, one of whom never returns, and she dreams this repeatedly, in retrospect seeing these dreams as admonitions from God to prepare her "to endure scenes
of most unusual affliction" (Taves 64). Having dreamed almost all the events that come to pass (except for the details of the "strange unaccountable something" that caused them to separate forever (65)), Abigail prays to be prepared for these new trials and not attached to "worldly things" (67).

In December of 1788 Mr. B. (as Abigail calls him) announces his plan to take a son and daughter to the Ohio Valley to look for land. Soon he changes his plans to include only his daughter: "He now commenced a new series of conduct in relation to this daughter, whom he selected to go with him, in order (as he pretended) to render himself pleasing and familiar to her; so that she might be willing to go with him, and feel happy . . ." (70). From this point on in the narrative Abigail repeats how "words fail" to describe what happened, and yet she continues to try to use words to render her feelings, her fear of Asa, and the horror of his behavior. "Must I record such grievousness against the husband of my youth?" (70), she asks. Unthinkable to her before marriage, Asa's conduct is virtually unsayable during it.

The only way to say it is to do more than simply describe the specific events that took place and/or how they made Abigail feel. Just as Mary How tries to account for Elizabeth's sexual abuse by accusing the girl of being wanton, Abigail needs to "account for" Asa's behavior in terms of Christian understandings of evil, her own deservedness, her proof that she did not provoke such behavior and in fact tried to stop it. 26 She eventually casts Asa as an enemy, an evil captor, but not before describing his respectful and often loving attention to her. Because she "felt the tenderest affection for him as [her] head and husband." she agonized over his betrayal, not wanting to believe him capable. She adopts
Psalm 55:12-13 to capture how much more wrenching and ambiguous it is to be under "this grievous rod" when the "cruel oppressor" is one's spouse: "It was not an enemy: then I could have borne it. Neither was it he that hated me in days past; for then I would have hid myself from him. But it was the man mine equal, my guide, my friend, my husband!" (these last two terms being substituted for "mine acquaintance") (73). One of the central themes in The Memoirs is the confusion and pain created by the seeming conflation of husband/lover/friend with oppressor/deceiver/abuser. Eventually Abigail reconciles these conflicting images and feelings through the framework of biblical text and Congregational interpretations.

As Asa pursues Phebe's affections, he spends more and more time with her, especially while she was spinning, and "seemed shy of [Abigail], and of the rest of the family. He seemed to have forgotten his age, his honor, and all decency, as well as all virtue. He would spend his time with this daughter, in telling idle stories, and foolish riddles, and singing songs to her, and sometimes before the small children" (72). Despite her suspicions that her husband was "continually plotting, to ruin this poor young daughter," Abigail "strove with all [her] might to banish it from [her] mind, and to disbelieve the possibility of such a thing" (72). She cannot "obtain a comforting view that those unusual afflictions were in mercy, and not in judgment: the rod was so severe" (73). At this time Abigail is pregnant with twins and unable physically to do much, even though she does try to "frustrate those abominable designs" (72). She is overcome with despair and doubts God's presence, unable to "conform" to His will in this, describing her grief as greater than all the grief of those who had lost loved ones (74). Although she says she
feels this way "for a season," just as soon as she asserts this right to question God's will, she chastises herself for judging "what trouble God should send" (74), agreeing to submit herself to God and be patient. Knowing her "nature [would have] sunk under the violence of the shock," Abigail must create a friend and comforter to sustain her. She believes she must bear it all alone, but sees God's grace in the premonitions he gave her in order to prepare her for such sufferings. She is not then abandoned by God but benefitted by His mercy.

Once she submits herself to God and is able to believe that He has prepared her to suffer well, Abigail is able to accept what is happening and then to act on Phebe's behalf. Not yet delivered of her twins, she watches as Asa turns from a pleasant and cajoling wooer into an angry and violent one, whipping Phebe in one instance, "without mercy... striking over her head, hands, and back... her face and eyes" (76), at other times with a "beach stick, large enough for the driving of a team; and with such sternness and anger sparkling in his eyes, that his visage seemed to resemble an infernal" (75).

Instead of idle songs, fawning and flattery, he grew very angry with her; and would wish her dead, and buried... He most cautiously guarded her against having any free conversation with me, or any of the family, at any time; lest she should expose him. (72)

... I clearly saw that Mr. B. entertained the most vile intentions relative to his own daughter. Whatever difficulty attended the obtaining of legal proof, yet no remaining doubt existed in my mind, relative to the existence of his wickedness; and I had no doubt remaining of the violence, which he had used; and that hence arose his rage against her. It must have drawn tears of anguish from the eyes of the hardest mortals, to see the barbarous corrections, which he, from time to time, inflicted on this poor young creature; and for not just cause. (75)

While pitying Phebe for what she must be suffering, Abigail admits "a degree of resentment, that she would not, as she ought, expose the wickedness of her father" by
agreeing to tell her mother and authorities what had been happening (76). But Abigail is
well aware that Asa's "intrigues, insinuations, commands, threats, and parental influence"
caused Phebe fear and shame that prevented her from speaking. We see Phebe, through
her mother's eyes, trying as best she can to resist her father's advances while not disobeying
him, an impossible task at best, and the very quality of the father-daughter relationship that
enables incest to occur and to remain in secrecy. Like her mother, she is suspended in the
dissonance between her father's socially and religiously defined role and his actual
behavior, as well as between her own defined role as an obedient daughter and the
religious imperative to resist evil and temptation.

Not until she gives birth to twins and watches one of them die does Abigail find
the strength to confront her husband. It is at this point that Abigail, as both sufferer and
witness, has arguably moved through what philosopher Alison Jaggar would call a process
of critically reflecting on her "outlaw emotions," emotional responses constructed by
dominant ideologies as "conventionally unacceptable" and characteristic of subordinate
groups (160). Having no one else to share her emotional responses with, Abigail becomes
confused and unable to name what she is experiencing: she turns to a text that helps her
organize and accept these outlaw emotions, but that also provides a means of acting on
them without deviating too much from her defined roles. In the following scene with Asa,
Abigail's resolution is bolstered by her firmly-held logic. She relies on neither emotion nor
reason to the exclusion of the other, but both equally, suggesting the extent to which her
spiritual diaries have become sites for engaging her emotions with other persuasive
discourses, producing a change in epistemology and action.
Abigail tells Asa what she thinks of his behavior with his daughter (he had long ago stopped sleeping in his wife's room) and when he becomes angry, even though such anger had frightened her in the past, she tells him that "the business [she] had now taken in hand, was of too serious a nature ... to be dismissed with a few angry words." She is "carried equally above fear, and above temper" (77) and asserts that she will pursue her course with whatever "wisdom and ability God might give [her]" (77). Throughout this discussion she attributes God's will to her resolve and the justness of her actions, authorizing her assertiveness in terms of direct revelation and biblical commandments. She tells him, "I would now soon adopt measures to put a stop to his abominable wickedness and cruelties. For this could and ought to be done. And if I did it not, I should be a partaker of his sins, and should aid in bringing down the curse of God upon our family" (77).

... Gladly would I have remained a kind faithful, obedient wife to him, as I had ever been. But I told Mr. B he knew he had violated his marriage covenant; and hence had forfeited all legal and just right and authority over me; and I should convince him that I well knew it ... And though it had ever been my greatest care and pleasure (among my earthly comforts) to obey and please him: yet by his most wicked and cruel conduct, he had compelled me to undertake this most undesirable business--of stopping him in his mad career. ... (78)

Abigail makes it very clear that she "is not in a passion" (78) but acting on "principle and ... long and mature consideration" (78). She has confided her deepest fears and anguish to her diary and come to a well-reasoned argument for acting independently and on behalf of her family. When Asa tries to appeal to her trust in God by offering to swear his innocence on the Bible, Abigail is undeterred, seeing clearly that "such an oath could not undo or alter real facts" (78). Asa becomes appropriately scared and repentant after awhile, even though he "denies the charges of incest."
Abigail sees herself as the savior of her family and Asa as the destroyer. Yet after confronting him, she is still willing to give him another chance. As fits his pattern, Asa is "pleasant and agreeable" (80) for a period of time, giving Abigail hope. Yet within a month he resumes his relationship with his daughter and conceives a sixteenth child with Abigail. Abigail confronts him again. She tries to pierce his apparent lies by invoking God's panoptical power to see everything in secret. As soon as Phebe turns eighteen she leaves home, but not before her mother pleads with her again to be a witness against her father:

As she was going, I had solemn conversation with her relative to her father's conduct. She gave me to understand that it had been most abominable. But I could not induce her to consent to become an evidence against him. I pleaded with her the honor and safety of our family; the safety of her young sisters; and her own duty; but she appeared overwhelmed with shame and grief; and nothing effectual could yet be done. (82)

Interpreting Phebe's reticence as evidence that God was not yet ready for beginning the legal process, Abigail begins a period of fasting and praying, seeking guidance for what she should do. After concluding that a legal separation was vitally necessary, she learns from two of her daughters that Asa's conduct with Phebe when he broke his promise to Abigail was "dreadful"—speaking euphemistically, she says that, after consulting Phebe about these allegations (Phebe was living with an aunt and uncle), "I now found that none of my dreadful apprehensions concerning Mr. B's conduct had been too high" (87). This spurs her resolve to separate from Asa and begins a series of Asa's comings and goings in the next year (1790-91).

In the end, Asa convinces Abigail to go to New York with him to settle some land for the divorce, and, having deceived her, leaves her there. Abigail makes her way back to
New Hampshire by herself, with the aid of people along the way. As soon as she returns in June of 1792 she has Asa arrested as he tries to escape. Abigail chooses an informal settlement in the divorce, apparently to avoid the emotional trauma of a trial for her family, and having sacrificed a large property settlement by avoiding a trial, she has to give her children to homes where they can be cared for. Records suggest that Phebe went to live with an uncle and eventually joined the Shaker community at Enfield, NH, under an assumed name, Phebe Huntington. By 1792, when it is believed Abigail began composing her memoirs, members of the community had come to believe that Abigail had been too forgiving in welcoming Asa back several times, and they believed she should leave town as well (Taves 11). The writing that began as a way to "bear her burdens" thus became a way for her to justify herself for what she had not done sooner. Her private writings were woven into a public document that blurs the too-easy distinctions between private/public, emotion/reason, sentimental/rational. Even in this early narrative, sexual and physical abuse erupt as neither one nor the other of these dichotomies, but all simultaneously, a merger of the intensely private/ emotional/ sentimental and the intensely public/ reasoned/ rational.

Although Abigail's memoirs are not written from Phebe's perspective, they are still arguably one of the earliest American narratives of domestic violence, particularly of incest. Abigail's account is startling to read, overflowing with her prayers and supplications, her grief, her anger. Like the colonial court records, The Memoirs are a public document and Abigail, as we have seen, calls on various "authorizing discourses" to understand and establish several truths about herself, her daughter, her husband, the act of incest, and
God's mercy. In doing so she adopts the narrative form of the captivity narrative as well as the traditions of conversion narratives and spiritual diaries that were a vital part of Puritan life (Taves 10; Kagle 29-30). One of her central struggles is to gather enough valid evidence to prosecute Asa, knowing that her own suspicions, observations, and information from her children are not enough to prove his crimes in the face of his reputation in town. We see Abigail trying to make sense of her husband's rages, deceptions, and repentances within legal discourses of what "incest" means as well as within her Congregational religious beliefs. This writing leads her to assert what power she has to keep her children and herself away from Asa's violence, but it also maintains the power structures imbedded in all the discourses she engages to "liberate" herself and her family.

As many historians and literary critics have argued, it was common during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for women to assert a degree of power through Christian ideology, maintaining their roles as "true women" even as they boldly transgressed them. Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is a fine example, a text where, as Houston Baker argues, Harriet is also a victim of sexual violence (fatherhood under slavery connoted rape) (52). Unlike Abigail Abbot Bailey, however, Harriet critiques the power structure that enables such abuse to occur. Like Jacobs and Bailey, the young author of the letter that began this chapter, Grace, is trying to contextualize and argue for the choices she has made to leave her family and abdicate her role as caretaker and surrogate wife to her father. In writing to her Sunday School teacher, Grace situates herself within her Christian beliefs and adopts its arguments to justify her rebellion against her father.
In the twentieth century, Leigh Gilmore argues, Christian ideology has waned as a "self-authorizing discourse" and psychoanalysis has become a prevailing mode of understanding one's "self" and of structuring autobiography (108). Like any discourse, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy create certain truths about sexual violence, the people involved, and their consequent behaviors. As I have discovered, however, neither psychoanalysis nor psychotherapy dominate the ways of speaking about sexual abuse in student essays. While forms of pop psychology do emerge in some texts, the student essays I have studied employ a wide range of discourses, many of them from academic disciplines as well as popular culture. As I will argue later, psychotherapeutic discourses do populate ways of talking about sexual abuse, but, within composition studies, they seem to be the dominant modes teachers and critics use, not always students, to interpret students and their textual representations, for disciplining what can be said, how, and by whom.

"By Speaking Out We Educate": Student Writing

*Outlaw emotions stand in a dialectical relation to critical social theory: at least some are necessary to develop a critical perspective on the world, but they also presuppose at least the beginnings of such a perspective.*

Alison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge"

*The pedagogical problem in the era of the post-modern is to place emotion, which has been severed from meaning, at the disposal of meaning once again and thereby to produce affective investments in forms of knowledge that will lead to empowerment and emancipation.*

Lynn Worsham, "Emotion and Pedagogic Violence"

I began this essay by asking what it might mean for a student to contextualize his or her experience of being sexually abused within historical and social frameworks. In considering the court documents from 1660 and Abigail Abbott Bailey's *Memoirs* from 1815, I have explored some of the contexts, ideologies, and relations of power that shaped
the ways these texts were written and then used. Because Christianity has lost its efficacy as an authorizing discourse in the 20th century, it seems easy to note the differences between Abigail’s interpretation of events and a contemporary reader’s interpretation, and it is this jarring contrast that emphasizes the role of discourse in shaping reality and subjectivities. If a student were to read Abigail’s text, then, s/he would encounter what the abusive experience has already taught, that reality and one’s sense of self is figured by language and power. At the same time, s/he would be confronted with the fact that such abuse has occurred for centuries, and that even in this unusual memoir the victim is silenced and almost effaced from the text, her subjugated knowledge part of what motivates her mother to write and to act, but not yet part of the critical dialogue that might intervene in this physical form of oppressive disciplinary power.

However, Abigail’s position as both a sufferer of abuse and a witness to that of her daughter renders her both a disciplined subject and a subject with a degree of power to act on and for another. She locates these subjectivities within her Christian belief system, finding in its literacy practices a place to write her way into a discourse that allows her to act. In the process she constructs a self that enables her to suffer and yet still do what she can to protect herself and her children. Such a sense of wholeness, transient though it may be, is an identity that doesn’t deny fragmentation and situatedness, but holds these in tension with discourses that construct a unified self free from the touch of culture and history. Although her text does reinforce a number of dominant ideologies about gender, race, religion, and class, it also figures moments of resistance. In reading her narrative, a student can become a witness of another kind, watching a woman find a language for her
outlaw emotions that enables her both to reflect critically on them and to act critically in a social way.

Student essays about sexual abuse differ significantly from these historical texts, of course, but both adopt popular discursive traditions not only to structure how they understand their lives and their "selves," but whether they will be listened to and by whom. Students use their writing to sort through what has happened to them, to make sense of their suffering within the discourses available, to argue for the choices they have made and hope others will make upon reading their essays. Given all the venues in twentieth-century culture for discussing sexual abuse, some students choose to do so in writing classes, adopting the long and varied traditions of essay writing in the university along with prevailing discourses on sexual abuse, all of which guide what can be said, how, and for what purpose. But they do this, of course, within a college or university setting that carries with it expectations about textual production and the roles of students and teachers that influence how the subject of sexual violence can or should be written about. As I argued earlier, because sexual abuse has been "medicalized" in contemporary culture, constructed as an "illness" that can be "cured" with appropriate therapy, those who have been abused are assumed too emotionally unstable to write about the experience in an academic, dispassionate and analytical way. It is acceptable to write about the experience as a phenomenon and the participants as "subjects," but less so to write from one's position of being subjected to such violence. I want to begin, then, by considering how students situate themselves in their college essays vis-a-vis these assumptions about the personal and the academic and examine the various cultural discourses they use to structure their texts.
As I do so I will look at the ways "emotion" disrupts some of their appropriations of academic discourse.

**Emily: "The Worst Scar"**

In the course I taught on "Writing About Female Experience," three students chose to write about being sexually abused by a family member. Composed of predominantly second-semester, first-year students (18-21 years old), the course was one option among many other "Special Topics" courses that would fulfill the second-semester composition requirement. Twenty-seven young women and one young man elected the course, and at least three of the women had taken my first semester writing course the previous term.

Although I had tentatively assembled a packet of readings and made a list of possible topics to organize the course around, I asked students during the first week to write about what they hoped to get out of the course and what issues they would like to take up during discussion. I had already prepared a sequence of three exploratory writing assignments that asked the students to recreate a personal experience and then "theorize" from it; the rest of the reading responses and more formal essays would be relatively open assignments. The two required texts for the course were Colette Dowling's *The Cinderella Complex* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, and the packet I eventually assembled based on the class' interests included articles from sociology, psychology, history, and literature (Lillian Rubin, Ruth Sidel, Carol Smith-Rosenberg, and Gerda Lerner, among others) covering such issues as the dynamics of male/female relationships, childbirth, sexuality, homosexuality, careers, and marriage. Class time was spent primarily in whole class discussions of readings or student papers, with frequent group workshops. I met in
conference with each student twice, sometimes three times during the term. We had a panel of lesbian students come in during our section on sexuality, and we created a survey together to research the feelings of both college and working men and women about issues of independence/dependence, career/family, and male/female relationships to see if women had "changed" since Dowling's book (as many of my students contended they had).

Most of the women wrote about personal issues in their papers—many were reconsidering their current romantic relationships, questioning their choices for careers, and trying to find a comfortable balance between independence and dependence. They were sharing personal stories with each other throughout the course, engaging in heated debates about the questions raised in readings and what it might mean to be a woman in American culture. The young man in the class, after freely admitting he took the course at first to be a voyeur, began to write about the women in his own life—his mother, sisters, friends, and girl friends—with the same kind of serious attention to gender, class, sexuality, and race that the other students gave. He began by making fun of the subject of the course, but soon found his classmates less and less willing to tolerate his flippancy. He also increasingly resisted being cast as a representative for men. Within the first few weeks of the term, students were renegotiating their relationships within the classroom based on the gendered assumptions they were beginning to critique.

It is probably not surprising that three young women wrote about their sexual abuse in a course focused on women where the class members asked that we read and write about sexuality and violence. Our readings had been raising issues of body image and self-esteem from the beginning: Before the first exploratory assignment, we read Alice
Walker's "Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self" and Susan Sontag's "Beauty: Women's Put-Down or Power Source"; then I asked them to "think of a time when you (or another female) had a particularly negative experience with 'being beautiful.' . . . [T]hen go on to draw some conclusions about what it means to be beautiful in our society (see Appendix C, Exploratory Writing #1). By focusing on beauty here I was orienting the students' perspective on women's experience and possibly revealing some of my own personal issues about being female. I imagine that this assignment and the discussion we had afterward created a context where issues of sexuality and body image could begin to be discussed, and also communicated to the women in the class that I was dealing with some of the same issues they might be.

In the next two assignments I asked them to write about times when it was to their advantage (or someone else's) and to their disadvantage to be a female, and as a class we came up with beginning "theories" about what it means to be female and why. Given all the stories people were sharing and the often radically different views on these questions they sorted through, a dynamic and vibrant community began to form. After we read Dowling, Morrison, and some of the readings in the packet, I asked students to begin drafting essays that engaged the ideas in these texts, gradually integrating and analyzing their own experiences and those of published writers. Although these assignments focused on responses to readings, I began to see self-reflective narratives from students that dealt frankly with issues of sexuality, power, and trust.

It was within this context that Emily handed an essay in about being abused by her uncle, that, I realize now, appears to fulfill writing teachers' fears about this situation: I was
the first person she had told about the incident, and the essay narrates the abuse with minimal detail and for the apparent purpose of "getting it out." In her process note to me she says,

This paper was difficult to write because it's so personal. I had some problems being detailed because a lot of what happened has been blacked out of my memory. I'm glad to get it off of my chest. It's been bothering me this past year. As I wrote about it I discovered that the incident has affected me more than I thought. Please focus on the subject itself as opposed to the grammar.

Emily was a quiet student, sitting in the back of the classroom with her head usually resting on the long, black, metal tables. Not understanding why she seemed so passive and disengaged, and unable to conference with her frequently enough to ask, I assumed she just wanted to do as little as possible to pass the course. Then she handed me her third essay with my own words staring back at me, the ones I thought I had stealthily embedded in my introduction to the readings on sexuality: "I bet most of you in this class have been sexually abused in some way. I know I have . . . ." Although I probably said "a few" instead of "most" and went on to cite the statistics of women and men who are likely to have been abused, what Emily obviously heard was, as she says in her next line, someone who could understand. In saying "I could write about it and Michelle would understand," she figures me as a potentially non-judgmental listener who is willing to hear this secret, a move many of the instructors in my study read as the student's desire to have a therapeutic relationship with them. The essay seems to be written only to me, not to a larger audience; in fact, not until the last paragraph of the essay does she move to shape the essay toward a purpose a writing teacher might expect:

I think that there should be more support groups for victims of childhood molestation. Maybe if we could talk about what happened to us when we were

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little and shared our feelings the after effects would not be as dominant as they are now. Therapy can begin at any age. It's never too late to start over. Past traumas can't be changed but future ones can.

Yet it is important that she even makes this move because it suggests her awareness that this draft must bear a likeness to "college writing," in this case an essay that poses a problem, analyzes it, and then offers solutions.

Even in an essay that seems to be a confession and evokes a therapeutic relationship, then, the student still tries to shape the draft for an ill-defined general audience, not just for me the teacher, and expresses a concern for the social ramifications of this behavior. Her understanding of the discourse of "college essay writing" permeates this seemingly ego-centric text. The structure of her paragraphs suggests that Emily is aware that an essay makes claims and then offers evidence. In the second paragraph, for example, the essay gives a one-paragraph summary of the abuse—an assertion, "I was sexually abused by my step-uncle when I was four years old and again when I was eight"—and then offers support that provides context, explaining why she ended up in such close proximity to this uncle and why she trusted him:

When I was four my mother and I went to live with my grandma and step-grandpa for a few months. Whenever they would go out grandpa's son, Henry, would babysit me. I knew and trusted him and thought what he was doing to me was o.k. No one had ever told me it wasn't.

The following paragraphs elaborate on the statements of the previous one, as well as on the responses of the adults she told at the time.

I can't really remember everything that happened; parts of it are blacked out, which is somewhat of a blessing. I remember that when mom, grandma and grandpa left the house Henry would make me sit on his lap on the big brown chair. We would sit there and watch T.V. He would kiss me open mouthed and fondle me. He would also make me touch him in places that I shouldn't have. He never
actually raped me but he might as well have.

When I was eight years old Henry came to stay with us in ______. I hadn't told my mother anything so she let him stay in my room; there was no other place for him to stay and I had twin beds in my room. One night I was afraid of the shadows in my closet so Henry got into bed with me to protect me. He started fondling me and whispering in my ear. "It's alright. It's o.k.,” he told me. But it wasn't and this time I knew it.

He managed to pull my panties down and was really close to having intercourse with me. Somehow I found the strength in my eighty pound body to push him off of me. I ran from there into my mother's room; I stayed there the rest of the night. In the morning, I told my mother and her boyfriend what happened. They made immediate plans to send Henry back to ______. My brother Jim's reaction was somewhat different.

Jim and Henry were only a year apart and they were very good friends. When my mother told him why Henry was being sent back, Jim was very upset. "She's making it up! Henry wouldn't do a thing like that!” he argued. When he should have been big brotherly and beat the crap out of that skuzball he deserted me. My own flesh and blood turned his back on me and believed that disgusting wast of a human being. For that, I don't think I will ever forgive him.

After Henry left nothing else was said about it. I didn't receive counseling, my mother and I did not discuss it; it was like it never happened. My mother didn't even stop to think about it when she found out about my not being a virgin. Doesn't she understand that I probably wouldn't have made my stupid mistakes if I didn't already feel so dirty?

I didn't really think it affected me much. I did not start analyzing it until just last year. I used to watch Oprah and hear her talk about sexual abuse; that when a woman is molested as a child she is either promiscuous or wants nothing to do with men as a teen and into adulthood. But I was different. I was totally unaffected—right?

As I look back at some of the decisions I've made, I now realize that I leaned more towards the promiscuous side. I lost my virginity at fifteen. I was drunk; I had just met the guy a few hours before and things got out of control. I still kick myself for it. It was awful. I didn't love him; I didn't even know his last name. It was painful mentally and physically. It still hurts; I feel like the biggest slut alive. Was my decision three years ago somehow related to my experiences when I was four and when I was eight?

In her final paragraph Emily speculates on possible solutions to the problems she now recognizes she has as a result of this experience, making an explicit move toward a purpose that turns the personal, narrative details into support for a socially-directed claim. While the general tenor of the essay is relatively dispassionate (again suggesting her sense of
appropriate tone in a college essay), this tone is disrupted when she expresses anger at her brother for not believing her: "When he should have been big brotherly and beat the crap out of that skuzball he deserted me. My own flesh and blood turned his back on me and believed that disgusting waste of a human being. For that I don't think I will ever forgive him." This anger only seeps out again in a phrase or two later in the essay, and like the emotional descriptions in other students' essays, it seems to beg for a purpose in the text that hasn't yet been found.

This anger as well as her guilt for "losing her virginity at fifteen" and feeling "like the biggest slut alive" are arguably the kind of "outlaw emotions" Jaggar describes, and they are more unconventional/unacceptable responses within the academic institution than within popular culture itself. As Emily says, she can watch Oprah and begin to feel connected to a larger group of people who feel these same emotions, but they strike a dissonant chord in this written text, and for many readers may overshadow the essay's move toward a problem-solving, socially-oriented purpose. Emily, some may argue, is not in control of her emotions in this text, and this lack of control not only makes some writing teachers uncomfortable, it suggests she may not be able to fulfill the expectations of the course. Writers need to control their texts, particularly their emotions and personal investments. But who here is concerned about controlling Emily's emotions? I would argue that the issue is not that Emily cannot control her emotions, but that we as teachers cannot control them. In this sense, as Lutz would contend, Emily's text—the emotions it expresses—challenges the power differences of the student-teacher relationship

Faigley and others would argue that Emily's essay celebrates a unique individuality
and echoes a western confessional tradition where emotion leads to an "inner truth" about the self. By extension, the emotions expressed are perceived as part of the process of introspection. However, this argument assumes emotions are internal, biological responses, "least subject to control, least constructed or learned (hence most universal), least public, and therefore least amenable to socio-cultural analysis" (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1). Yet the political struggle in composition studies over who gets to express what emotions in what contexts (if at all) suggests that emotions—discourses on or about emotions as well as discourses from them—are about power and knowledge. So too are the acts of sexual violation that these students are writing about. When interpreted as socially constructed, emotions become always already social, political, and subject to critique. If, as Lutz and others argue, "emotion discourses may be one of the most likely and powerful devices by which domination proceeds" (76), then it is imperative that we begin to read student texts like Emily's as a struggle over identity, discourse, and power, as well as a desire for what Jaggar calls a "critical social theory" (160): "Critical reflection on emotion is not a self-indulgent substitute for political analysis and political action. It is itself a kind of political theory and political practice, indispensable for an adequate social theory and social transformation" (164). Instead of seeing students like Emily as incapable of critical reflection because of their traumatic experiences, I propose we respect their move to bring that experience into a public and disciplinary context and find ways to encourage the critical reflection already evidenced in their texts.3

Fanny: "Revision"

A recurring theme in the student essays I received for my study is the process of
sorting through conflicting notions of "truth," a perspective on language and ideology that informs many critical and postmodern pedagogies. In their texts students often weave together the voices of others who disbelieve them, or believe them but don't act to protect the child, who seek to overlay family tales of deception and abuse with dominant constructions of the "normal" family. Who gets to decide what happened and why? Who decides whether an individual has "in fact" been abused, and on what terms? To begin to answer these questions, these student essays engage the authoritative discourses of various disciplines, from sociology, history, and the law to feminist and various psychological theories. In doing so they not only begin to work toward some of the features valued in academic writing, but they begin to argue for a particular way of defining their experience and themselves.

Fanny, a nontraditional student and mother of high-school-age children in an advanced writing course, centers her essay around this permeable line between truth and lies (see Appendix B). She chose to write about her abuse within the context of her family, and, like Emily, never steps into the academic research about her subject nor ventures to comment on the social conditions that may have allowed the abuse to occur. She told me that her daughter had recently confronted her with her daughter's memories of being sexually abused, and this had prompted Fanny to begin the therapy with which she was still involved. Written in a course explicitly focused on the tradition of the personal essay, Fanny's paper engages psychotherapeutic and feminist discourses as she structures her essay around themes of revision and the handing down of traditions and stories:

"My family is charming," she begins. "Through generations on both sides of my
parents' family, the apocryphal tales and myths are all about dapper, witty men, and women who were warm, talented mothers. I collected these people and the stories about them with zeal; they gave me an identity, a persona, a tradition." What becomes clear is that this charm is a facade, a deception that enabled generations of women to be abused and to be oblivious when their own daughters were being abused: "Now, I am looking at all those charming people with new eyes. Now, I know I am part of a long line of abused women, and that I, too, was both abused and was unable to see when my daughter was, in turn, abused." Arguing and illustrating that revision leads to new knowledge, Fanny carefully chooses details to reveal both the charm and the violence of her male ancestors. Her grandfather, who had a mistress and was quite rich, was a Christian Scientist who refused his wife treatment for stomach cancer: "I can hear my mother's voice as she told me this part—her father held her mother on the kitchen table, with my mother and uncle present as young children, while she died in extreme pain, screaming and weeping in front of her children. My charming grandfather did that."

The sarcasm in this last line becomes more explicit anger on the next two pages when she describes her father and her belief that he molested her. 31 Again balancing details that describe a sinister and yet compelling charm, Fanny demonstrates apparent command over the artistic shaping of the essay which gives way to language that seems inconsistent with the rest of the paper:

I was the oldest, and the first to experience both his charm and his filth. He was rotten to the core; in fact, I don't think he had a core in the sense of having a character, some sort of moral sense. He stole my brothers' caddying money from their dressers, he lied and lied and lied. But, by god, he was charming... he fooled a lot of people. He even fooled us children into loving him.
This anger and sense of betrayal leads into a discussion about her mother, a woman who seemed loving and giving as well, but who "also coldly rejected my sister and me at times when we needed her most." After she describes the process of reconstructing the past with her siblings and discovering that her daughter had been sexually abused, Fanny focuses on the point she has been leading to, that she cannot simply stop with reseeing her own family. She must also ask how her own behavior has been shaped by that. This self-reflection means she has to accept her own role in "not being there" for her daughter, in recreating the same neglect and "intolerance of fuzzy thinking and sloppy behavior." In the language of current discourse on sexual abuse, she no longer views herself as a victim, but as both a survivor and a participant in the abuse of another.

The purpose of this essay seems to be to describe her process of revision, arguing that when "I rebuild the past, I am beginning a process of inventing or maybe transforming my future." Fanny very clearly borrows from therapeutic discourse about family relations, physical, sexual, and verbal abuse: remembering one's past with one's family as a way of healing past wounds, accepting both the pain and the love of one's parents, understanding that when a survivor becomes a parent, she will need "to hold herself to such a high standard and to control both herself and her children in order to save us all from the abuse she [has] experienced." The very assumption implicit in her last line is consistent with most therapeutic approaches: "No amount of revision is going to influence that future if I cannot summon the courage to look behind that curtain."

Fanny's essay constructs a view of the family where no one person is to blame for abusing the intimacies of familial relations, a view of the family consistent with family
systems theory. As many feminists have argued, such a view posits a "dysfunctional" family against a "normal" one, reinscribing the unequal exercise of power that occurs in family structures (Bell 87). Yet much of the physical space of Fanny's essay is devoted to discussing her male relatives as abusive toward women, men who had economic and familial power that allowed them to exploit women sexually and physically in and outside the home. She calls her paternal grandfather's family a "charming patriarchy," evoking a set of feminist arguments about gender and violence that seem to stand in for a pre-existing set of social critiques. Given the popular currency of family systems therapy and some feminist arguments about sexual violence, it may be Fanny is assuming her audience will bring this knowledge to her text. Nonetheless, there is an opportunity here to encourage her to reflect on the differences between these two discourses and to explore further what that might mean for her process of revision and reshaping her identity. Fanny is employing these discourses, as well as the expectations of personal essays discussed in her course, to reshape the "truths" handed down to her about her family and abuse. At the same time, she is establishing a few truths about these things herself, using the framework of these discourses to structure an argument, to give a context for naming and expressing emotions, and to illustrate the consequent changes to her understanding of her affective relationship and responsibility to others.

While Fanny may seem to be constructing a unified, individualized, humanist self through this writing, arriving at an "inner truth," I would argue that she is engaged in the very processes valued and encouraged by most epistemic approaches to composition. The controlling metaphor of the essay is revision, and its substance is the reconstructing of
dominant familial epistemologies. She is using her own traumatic experiences and the authoritative, dominant discourses that define ways of speaking about families and abuse to critique those epistemologies, situating herself within a socio-political dialectic. The fact that she does not extend this critique to ideology and power is not a consequence of her analytic approach or her self-absorbed introspection. It is a place for teachers to begin talking about what such a critique might look like and what its consequences might be (if this is a direction the teacher wants to encourage). Within a course informed by critical pedagogy, for example, a teacher might ask Fanny to further contextualize this experience historically. Within a postmodern pedagogy the teacher might point out the various discourses Fanny situates herself within, asking her to pursue some of the conflicts between them and consider what other discourses she might have chosen.

Nicole: "Child Sexual Abuse"

When the students in my study did draft essays that integrated academic research on sexual abuse, they, too, often used the arguments and purposes constructed in this material to shape their own, and they rarely questioned or critiqued what they were reading. This sometimes uncritical stance, however, is not necessarily the result of the students' inability to analyze critically an emotional and potentially destabilizing experience - it may also be affected by the instructor's ways of challenging the student (or not) to adopt this stance (regardless of whether the subject is bodily violence). A case in point is a rather extraordinary researched essay written by a college freshman, Nicole (see Appendix B). In it she weaves scenes and reflections on the memories she has of her uncle fondling her over a seven year period with a broad range of outside texts and interviews, from the
popular *The Courage to Heal* to psychological and sociological journal articles, to a government document and an interview with a perpetrator.

Nicole begins her essay in a rather unusual way for a research paper. Instead of opening with a general definition of sexual abuse or a statement about how horrible a crime it is, she describes a scene of the general sequence of events that usually occurred when "it" happened, when her uncle decided he "wanted some company." She speaks euphemistically about the abuse until the last third of the paragraph when she describes his behavior as "fondling." She sets up a scene with all the features now associated with sexual abuse: a young girl is alone with an older male, usually a relative she trusts, he entices her, abuses her, then threatens her if she tells anyone, calling her a "bad, dirty girl." From this introductory scene she then asserts that her "story is not uncommon," using this as a segue into the statistics of boys and girls who are abused by the time they are eighteen. Throughout her essay, Nicole uses either her own experience as an opening for a researched claim, or uses the research to frame her own experience. Her specific details, opinions, and reflections primarily support and illustrate the research, rarely being used to question or critique what she has read.

Nicole is explicit in the essay that her purpose in writing is to educate: "In order for this abuse to end our society needs to wake up. We have to work together, family, schools, and the legal system to stop this heinous abuse against children." By the final paragraph of the text she reiterates this sentiment and adds, "By speaking out we educate. As Ellen Bass [co-author of *The Courage to Heal*] stated: 'In truth itself, there is healing.'" This essay is not a conscious attempt to use writing to work through unresolved feelings, to ask for help.
from her readers, or to document in painful detail the emotional impact of the abuse. She presents the "truth" of her abuse as an event of the past, one that does affect her in the present, but one that does not interfere with her abilities as a research writer. Like the academic and psychologically-based texts she has read, Nicole tells this "truth" about sexual abuse by addressing the who-what-where-when-and-how questions: why sexual abuse is underreported, what often happens if a child does tell someone, what the emotional effects are for the survivor, why some men molest children, what elements of popular culture contribute to this molestation, and what is being done legally to prosecute offenders. Given the sociological and legal rhetoric she assumes to educate her readers, Nicole really has no reason to mention her own experience at all—the research she quotes carries its own authority and offers "examples" that could illustrate her points.

Nicole integrates her personal experience in large part because her instructor introduces the research paper by having them write a personal essay, then an "argumentative" essay on the same subject without using research. After they draft an essay from the research they have done, she then asks them to combine all three drafts, resulting in a research paper that constructs an argument using personal experience and outside research. Thus Nicole's choices are prompted by the specific assignment, and she rather skillfully composes a multiple-voiced, transactional piece of writing. What is striking about her use of experiential details, however, is the way they guide the shape of the essay and equally share actual "space" on the page.

After opening with a generalized scene of how her uncle usually touched her, Nicole moves from general statistics and her desire for change to a specific moment when...
her uncle is caught. A friend has come over to play and Uncle Karl grabs her, evidently attempting to fondle her, as well. Nicole's friend screams and brings "Grammie" into the room, arousing hope in Nicole that "Karl would stop touching me forever and Grammie would kick him out for being a bad man." When Grammie accepts Karl's pledge to never do it again, she tells Nicole not to tell anyone. This scene introduces the essay's next section, which is focused on why people do not report sexual abuse.

As in the previous student essays I've discussed, the issue of betrayal is a dominant theme in Nicole's essay, suggesting how much an issue it is to determine a degree of "truth" about where to place responsibility. It is here that she expresses indirect anger at her grandmother for not taking the incident seriously enough. She describes a day that she overheard a conversation in a restaurant that "reminded me of what happened with my grandmother." In the lines that follow, notice the shifts in tone and discourse:

The lady said: "I thought they were abusing their kids, but I wasn't sure so I didn't report it." I wanted to scream at her. It is much better to be overly cautious than to have an innocent child hurt. According to Gail Wyatt and Gloria Powell, in 1984 200,000 child sexual abuse cases were unreported in nineteen states . . . .

The juxtaposition here of several discourses is fairly clear. Nicole weaves together her experience—as a sequence of events—her emotional responses to those experiences, and the ways the research echoes both the events and her responses. Her text is an extended example, I would argue, of a woman situating her outlaw emotions in relation to those of others, albeit conveyed through the voices of researchers, and then beginning the process of critically reflecting on those emotions, a process that opens the way to a critical social practice.

What is also significant about this section of Nicole's essay is the way she asserts
her authority as a writer and researcher. Not only does she fairly equally weave her experience and responses with outside research, she also comments on that research, positing herself as both the subject of this essay and a subject in control of it:

These figures don't even take into account the countless children who, like I did, remain silent about their abuse. According to Elizabeth Stanko only about six percent of women sexually abused as children ever tell the authorities and one out of five had never told anyone (25). To me, this shows how prevalent sexual abuse is in our society and how hard it is for children and adult survivors to tell their experiences. . . . (emphasis added).

For the rest of this section, Nicole discusses the various reasons children don't tell adults about their abuse, citing a campus Sexual Harassment and Rape advocate as well as a 1952 study that argued sexual abuse had no lasting negative effects on children.

This study effectively opens up her next section, an examination of the effects of sexual abuse on children, and she returns to her grandmother's betrayal. She links this kind of silence to the conclusion many survivors draw that they are in fact the ones to blame for the abuse. She then describes in euphemistic detail the way Karl would approach her, and on this particular day, the way he forced her to perform fellatio.

It made me feel so disgusting. I still don't remember everything that I felt that day, but I do remember running to the bathroom after and gaging. I brushed my teeth repeatedly as if that would change what he'd made me do. It was that day that I promised myself never to tell anyone because everyone would think that I was a dirty, terrible girl.

At this point readers may wonder why she feels the need to narrate this scene and her own feelings of guilt and shame. "Guilt" and "shame" should carry her meaning here, one might argue, and she should avoid letting us peer into her vulnerabilities. Yet these terms do not carry the emotional and imaginative impact of the scene. nor do they demand that the reader directly confront what it meant for this young girl to be forced to engage in oral
sex. If she has made readers uncomfortable, then she has affected the sites where dominant ideologies have conditioned "bodies" to respond to "distasteful" behaviors (Bourdieu): if Nicole's specific details are disturbing, such an emotional response may feel "natural," but that naturalness obscures "the ways culture is present in the writer's very act of experiencing the composing process and in the reader's responses to the writer's texts" (R. Miller 272-273). The scene Nicole describes here is a moment when she is socialized to name her emotional responses to what she now interprets as an abusive act, and in composing this researched essay, she is confronted with the arbitrariness of those emotional responses. They are, in a sense, denaturalized for her, and placed within a context that begins to address the issues of power that mapped those emotions of guilt and shame into her body. At the same time, she forces readers to confront their seemingly natural responses to her text, opening the way to an important process of critical reflection for them.

Nicole does not hesitate over this scene as I have, however, but instead moves into her own self-doubting questions ("I wonder if I couldn't have done anything to stop Karl") and the explanations for that self-doubt given by the authors of the popular Courage To Heal. She asserts that the child is never to blame, reiterating one of the dominant assumptions that operate in current theories about sexual abuse. Throughout the rest of the essay she calls on interviews, academic journal articles, incidents reported in the press, and specific laws being considered in other states to both create and advance her arguments. The essay is primarily informative, seeking to establish various assertions about sexual abuse that the audience may be unfamiliar with but that people need to know if they are
going to be motivated to change the conditions that produce such sexual violence.

Like other students whose essays I have read, Nicole chooses from a seemingly limited number of rhetorical purposes in writing this polyvocal essay: to render her experience and its significance in an essay form, to argue for social change through education and legal reform, and to criticize the media for its role in sexualizing children. These purposes are dictated by the discourses these student writers appropriate, just as Abigail Abbot Bailey's purposes were structured by the available narrative frames of the captivity narrative, spiritual diaries, and Congregationalist Christian doctrine. By engaging these discourses, these writers restructure the meanings of their experiences, their identities, and the possibilities of socially-oriented change. If the work of the student essays I've analyzed above can be considered a form of healing, however, it is one that occurs within a dialectical process, not only among the many discourses they employ, but between the teacher and student. And as many students have said to me, they want as much to "heal" on a social level as on an individual one. This is not a healing that creates wholeness in the sense of a unified, self-authorizing whole, but one that is continually in the process of accepting fragmentation, otherness, difference.

**Undoing the Subject of Certainty**

While it may seem that I have begged the question of how teachers might respond to student essays about bodily violence, I have in fact been trying to rephrase the question: our concerns about response, while important, still focus on teachers, not on students and what they may be doing in their texts. Instead, I have been asking what these students' texts might have to say about composition pedagogies and the assumptions that inform
them. In analyzing the various discourses students adopt to situate their experiences and arguments about sexual abuse, I have illustrated some of the ways these texts are not simply representations of a stable identity or inner truth. Contrary to what critics like Faigley, Swartzlander et al, and Pfeiffer contend, these essays blur the distinctions between emotion and reason, private and public, expressivist and social constructionist. The very experience of the sexual abuse arguably informs the epistemic philosophy of language the essays illustrate (to greater or lesser degrees).

In analyzing historical texts produced as the result of sexual abuse, I have also been arguing that, as Jarratt and others posit, historically situating one's experience is part of the process of learning that one's identity is socially and politically constituted, and thus that language mediates one's experience of "reality." These students seem, in fact, predisposed to developing a critical social theory: as Jaggar's theory implies, their outlaw emotions are necessary for developing this critical perspective, often apparent in the ways these outlaw emotions motivate their writing and their arguments.

Rather than focusing on the ways such essays reinforce Romantic, humanist subjectivities and evince failures of expressivist pedagogies, we might better respond by considering the ways students choose to represent these experiences and their identities. Historicizing these essays is only one way to respond, but it presupposes that a teacher recognizes the discourses that inform his/her responses to sexual abuse, and that s/he takes seriously the student's desire to write publically about his/her abuse.

If the trauma of sexual abuse is understood as the result of being "subjected to an experience for which [they have] not been socialized" (Davenport 79), then the survivors
of that abuse have experienced a discursive trauma: Sexual violence disrupts one's confidence in a stable, knowable reality. Signifiers and signified constantly shift. Thus, reality and one's sense of identity are deconstructive texts. In this sense, then, the students in writing classes who have been sexually abused are always already postmodern subjects, always already decentered, their identities constructed from the violence of this trauma.

If postmodern pedagogies aim for a similar type of decentering—"unsettl[ing] the complacency and conceptual identities of the student" as Gregory Jay argues (790)—then what are the differences between these intended results and the results of sexual abuse? Are both processes of fragmenting the self doing so in equally violent ways? These student essays and the subjectivities they construct certainly point to one assumption of postmodern pedagogies like Jay's: they assume a subject/student who experiences his/herself as centered, autonomous, existing in a knowable, stable reality. They also suggest the possible violence that may occur in decentering a subject. I am not arguing against postmodern pedagogy but considering the questions such student essays raise about it. Is there a place in a postmodern classroom for a student who is trying to appropriate an apparently stable and controllable discourse (in the form of academic writing and/or the cultural discourses that compete for meaning) as s/he struggles with what it means to have been violently decentered? What purposes does it serve to further decenter this student, or to encourage his/her belief that a stable identity might be found? Postmodern pedagogy educates a "wild subject," one who no longer has a self that can feel, creating "a kind of ultimate estrangement from or dissolution of the structures that traditionally have supported both self and world" (Worsham 133). The subjectivities of the sexually abused would seem
then to be welcome within a postmodern classroom.

Whether the emotions of these "wild subjects" are biologically based or not, these students have been taught to "name their affective lives" and to believe they have emotions to feel. Worsham argues that the prevailing Western belief that emotion is "a personal and private matter . . . conceals the fact that emotions are prevailing forms of social life, that personal life always takes shape in social and cultural terms" (126-127). Power relations determine "what can, cannot, or must be said about self and emotion, what is taken to be true or false about them, and what only some individuals can say about them" (Lutz 14). If as Worsham argues the primary work of ideological interpellation occurs by structuring the language of emotion, then "decolonization" needs to begin by recognizing the ways this naming occurs (126-167). The texts I have considered here, both historical and contemporary, name emotions and their attendant values within various contexts, "showing how emotion discourses establish, assert, challenge, or reinforce power or status differences" (Lutz 14). The process of renaming these emotions might begin with how the students are already in this process and how they might continue this analysis by situating their texts and experiences within contemporary and historical discourses and reflecting on the various consequence of each. What does it mean to speak a particular emotion in an "inappropriate" context? What sources of power are challenged or reinforced, and why?

Teachers too have been taught to name their affective lives within a Cartesian and Ramian context, and this seems all the more apparent in responses to student essays about abuse. The prevailing interpretations of sexual abuse, whether from *Oprah*, psychotherapy, the law, or feminist-sociological theories, articulate ways that witnesses.
listeners, or authority figures might respond to a story of sexual abuse, none of which seem to feel appropriate for many writing teachers. Most compositionists have distanced themselves from associations between writing and therapy, and it feels "natural" to feel discomfort, disgust, horror, anger, sadness in the face of such an essay. Any intervention is suspect—the student naturally feels vulnerable and thus easily hurt and exploited; form needs to be separated from content, and yet doing so might further hurt the student (implying that the content is connected to the student's sense of self); the affective attachments that might occur between student and teacher might "drain" the teacher and further damage the student because the teacher is not appropriately skilled. What power relations are being maintained by talking about emotion and identities in these ways? Our resistances to such subjects may suggest some of the gaps and silences in postmodern pedagogies—particularly in terms of the role of emotion and power relations—that we need to attend to.

One of the challenges in reading student essays about sexual abuse, it seems to me, is attending to what our responses as teachers—whether described as intellectual, emotional, physical—indicate about the way power is deployed in our classrooms and in discussions about the nature of academic work. Some students have been sexually violated, and they are in our classrooms whether we know it or not. If such violence is a form of oppression, and many agree that it is, then essays about such oppression are crucial to the projects of critiquing power and ideology. The students seem, indeed, to be part of the way there.
CHAPTER 4

THE BRUISES WERE INSIDE OF ME:
WRITING THE HUNGRY BODY

My body is no longer my own. I don't recognize the bones that stick out, or the emaciated legs and arms. I stare at the world from behind sunken, dark-circled eyes and hollow cheeks, and even they are not mine. When I see those old pictures of myself with rosy cheeks and bright eyes, I feel as though I am looking at a stranger. My body belongs to my doctor. He sees it once a week, plops me on a scale, pokes and prods me, watches my body's defenses against starvation, and charts my "progress." I am not a patient. I am a case study: this week's science project.

Laura, a student

Why Am I This Way, Why Am I That? Why Do Myself and I Constantly Spit?

When I was seventeen I played "The Flesh" in a church play. The Devil, the World, and the Flesh were all competing with each other to tempt an adolescent male, Chris, over to the dark side. My friend Missy was drafted to play the Devil because she could sing so well, and I vaguely remember the World being cast as a man. To play my part I donned my father's Wabash College sweatshirt, a decades-old memento from his days as an undergraduate before he was ousted for his low grades and penchant for partying. I looked sloppy, heavy, and self-indulgent, as any good "Flesh" would. At home my family laughed at how appropriate a choice I was for the role.

They often teased me about being a grazer, a veritable food processor, willingly enjoying ice cream, cookies, and my favorite, fried chicken and mashed potatoes. My parents would often disagree in front of me about whether I should be allowed to eat so
much after basketball practice because they feared, as I found out almost fifteen years later, I would become as increasingly heavy over the years as my pediatrician warned them I might. So they monitored me.

The morning of the play I worried about whether I could perform one of my key lines without bursting into laughter as I had done during rehearsal. Chris and I are in lotus position meditating, Chris trying hard not to be tempted.

"Ummmm. Ummm," Chris mummers with his eyes closed.

"Umm. Umm. I think I hear a twinkie calling me from the freezer," I say in meditative rhythm, trying to deliver the line straight. The congregation laughs, my parents and brothers about to explode through their German Lutheran reserve. With that line, the distance between me and my character collapses. I'm only 130 lbs at seventeen, but on that stage, in the guise of "The Flesh," I am acting out what I have come to believe— that my flesh is my primary temptress (after all, as a female I am chosen for this role), and that I'm overweight. I have been "dieting" since junior high school, going on Weight Watchers, drinking Tab, following every diet my nutritionally minded, slender mother tries. I play basketball for the school team, climb mountains with the church Youth Group in the summers. A few years before, my father had told me I could only fly to Florida to see some family friends if I lost ten pounds. I tried desperately, not eating or eating only a small meal a day. I lost only seven pounds and was convinced I would not be able to go. Instead, my father chided me for believing him.

At seventeen I embody a woman divided against herself (as later feminists and psychologist would define it), part of the growing number of young girls going on diets
before they reach puberty. I am only beginning to hear about eating disorders, and later will read about Debbie Boone's bulimia and descent into eating dogfood. Karen Carpenter will die, and like other teenagers at the time, I will forever remember the image of her skeletal face and the notes of her smooth, impassioned voice.

During the summer of my sophomore year of college, I work at McDonalds and eat only a hamburger or salad all day (and maybe a little ice cream at night). I lose ten pounds, have little energy, and feel like an attractive, powerful young woman for the first time in years. My parents sit me down and ask what's going on, why I'm not eating very much. I don't remember much of that conversation, but I end up changing my major first to nutrition, where I learn what I have just done to my body, and then I become an English major. In retrospect, this conversation, my shrinking body, and my ambivalence about what to "do" with my life are not coincidental. Nor, I imagine, is the link between my tightly controlled body and my desire to be a writer. I begin to eat "normally," but with a constant Panoptical gaze watching every piece of food I put in my mouth. Like a character on a stage, I have been born into a series of discourses that have shaped my subjectivity and cause me to be ever watchful of the temptations of the flesh.

I remember the pleasure of feeling my hipbone through my jeans, of gazing at the hollow my collarbones make when I wear a tank top, and of being able to zip those one-size-too-small jeans I used to hang in my closet as a body check. It is this pleasure that is probably most difficult to understand when one reads about people's experiences with self-imposed starvation, excessive exercise, and cycles of binging and purging. As the women in my study describe their daily rituals it is difficult to ignore the pain—of hunger, of
stomach acids, of burning muscles, of dying bodies and desperate souls. But these extremes of self-denial and punishment can lead to a kind of pleasure in being so close to an idealized and sexualized/fetishized female form. As most of the clinical and social studies argue, this pleasure is also associated with the ability to control one's body and achieve a degree of transcendence over its uncontrollable impulses (some researchers, in fact, have suggested that starvation becomes addictive (see Katz 622-623)). Yet with this pleasure comes the danger of kidney failure, for example, or angina, and in extreme cases, death.

Historically, women have controlled their appetites to the extremes of starvation since at least the medieval period, and the meanings of self-starvation have shifted over time. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century what we now call anorexia was understood as "fundamental to the model of female holiness" (Brumberg 41) because women's bodies were associated with food—thus spirituality could be expressed through the symbolics of eating behaviors (Brumberg 45). Currently, as Joan Jacobs Brumberg argues, this same behavior is no longer linked to piety; it "is embedded in patterns of class, gender, and family relations established in the nineteenth century" (46) and has come to signify an individual pathology for some, an embodiment of oppressive femininity for others.

Today researchers understand anorexic and bulimic behavior through the lenses of psychology, biomedical studies, and cultural theory. Psychologically it is understood as a young woman's struggle for autonomy and individuation during adolescence: her body becomes the site for her to control her identity in the face of feeling inadequate to the challenges of adulthood and sexuality. Usually high achievers from middle to upperclass
families, these young women are often afraid of choosing wrongly from the many opportunities they have and are "in a desperate fight against feeling enslaved and exploited, not competent to lead a life of their own" (Bruch, *Golden* ix-x). While some psychologists locate the disorder in oedipal or preoedipal struggles (a rejection of the mother/sexuality/fat and a desire for the father/intellect/muscle), others in family systems theory identify the causes within enmeshed, overprotective, and controlling family relationships. The young woman is taught to subordinate herself to others' needs and avoid individuality, often, it is argued, having a mother who is also preoccupied with food and her body, is submissive, and is unable to separate from her daughter. Key to understanding the paradoxes of an anorexic's struggle is the way she both conflates her body with her self (her identity comes from how well she masters control of it) and yet sees it as separate from her self (hunger is her body turning against herself and thus trying to obstruct her control/identity) (Orbach, "Accepting" 85-87).

Physically, the results of starving or binging and purging range from dehydration, esophageal sores, and abnormal body hair, to irregular heart beats, amenorrhea, kidney failure, and death. Physicians have posited a number of theories to explain why some women risk such bodily harm, theories that point to the hypothalamus, but none of which are conclusive or explain why the disorder is more prevalent in white, middle-class young women. To better explain why the disorder affects this population, cultural theorists have argued that Western ideals of femininity, particularly twentieth-century, mass produced images of slenderness, contribute to the increasing numbers of women who exhibit eating disordered behavior (a "fact" that is disputed on several grounds). In addition, many
critics argue that a disdain for fat is disdain for low socio-economic status (in the industrialized West), suggesting that eating disorders are also produced from class and gender distinctions. From these perspectives, eating disordered women are viewed as martyrs, Debra Gimlin says, rebelling against the strictures of gendered identity and powerlessness (105). They are no longer considered pathological, but victims of patriarchal culture who are enacting a form of protest. However, interpreting eating disorders this way is troubling to some: "If the anorectic's food refusal is political in any way," Brumberg asserts,

it is a severely limited and infantile form of politics, directed primarily at parents (and self) and without any sense of allegiance to a larger collectivity. Anorectics, not known for their sisterhood, are notoriously preoccupied with the self. The effort to transform them into heroic freedom fighters is a sad commentary on how desperate people are to find in the cultural model some kind of explanatory framework, or comfort, that dignifies this confusing and complex disorder. (37)

Brumberg's point is certainly important, particularly in emphasizing that this type of self-starvation is not consciously politically motivated. But she assumes political protest is only valid if it's organized and conscious, and her comments obscure the way this behavior, as a manifestation of femininity's discipline and control, challenge gender constructions in this culture without even needing to intend to. It serves both androcentric and capitalist ideologies to have weakened, emaciated women so disconnected from sociopolitical life, so isolated and seemingly autonomous (they are, in fact, quite dependent), so invested in feminine ideals that they cannot organize to protest in politically effective ways.40

While critics argue whether one can read historical cases of food-refusing behavior through contemporary psychological and sociological theories, it is important to emphasize that as a language associated with females, this behavior has served very different purposes

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and meanings over time, and contemporary interpretations reflect our cultural preoccupations and ideologies. This point is not to say, as Bordo points out, that no connections can be made among these time periods (69): significantly more females than males suffer from eating disorders, and they are concentrated in "advanced industrial societies within roughly the last hundred years" (Bordo 49-50). While not a recent phenomenon, eating and body control have come to signify what it means to be a woman in contemporary culture: "most women are 'disordered' when it comes to issues of self-worth, self-entitlement, self-nourishment, and comfort with their own bodies" (Bordo 57) because how they see themselves in the mirror (literally and figuratively) is what the culture has taught them to see. Socialized to experience themselves as deficient, women are expected, Carole Spitzack argues, to confess their deficiency through the rituals set up by discourses of health and body reduction, which also promise through religious metaphors to "save" women from the earthly and uncontrollable bodies they inhabit (159-160). And yet, consumer culture could not flourish without those desires and sense of deficiency.

The paradoxical nature of eating disorders, their multiple significations, seem inescapable in studying this phenomenon, and I have found them particularly difficult to address as I have read student essays that take up eating disorders as their subjects. These young women have inflicted/continue to inflict violence on their bodies, and when they sit in our classrooms or offices, we are face-to-face with both victim and perpetrator. A few of them have almost died. How can a teacher respond to such a complex and potentially dangerous self-abuse? What does it mean for the student to revisit these experiences
through writing? As a researcher I struggle to negotiate the feelings these student essays evoke for me, the memories of how pleasure is linked to pain and obsession to resistance, how a small tight body feels powerful in its emptiness and leanness, how the self in the mirror is never the self I want, even now that my own work tries to critique this body-shame that seems woven as sticky spider web.

Even as I write I feel shame at any kind of excess, whether of my body, my emotions, my writing. Each time I rewrite, I feel angry, bound, caged. Why? By most standards I've figured some things out, come to some conclusions, have something to share, all the things a good researcher is supposed to produce. But the problem is I can't ignore what seems to slip out of my control anymore, the bits and pieces of student writing, student voices that now seem stripped into abstractions, thickened by the descriptions, highlighted and shaded by current theories. As I try to control my texts/their texts, I can't ignore the parallels to our mutual desires to control our bodies, to manage our stigmas with heavy sweaters or Riki Lake or feminist theories. Where do our texts and bodies end? Where do our bodies belong, anyway? What role do I need to play (am I playing) in how these bodies are represented? I try to pad myself one more time for the discomfort my audience feels, for the impassioned voices I'll hear trying to put these bodies back where we would all feel they more comfortably belong.

This chapter has been the most difficult one to write. When I began to read the essays I had received about eating disorders, I realized I couldn't distinguish most of them from each other. Unlike the essays about sexual abuse where the textual features and approaches to the subject were fairly different, these texts made similar arguments.
followed similar organizational patterns, and rendered their writers almost indistinguishable. Fearing I had nothing to say beyond describing these similarities, I considered focusing more of my attention on the abuse essays where more "interesting" things seemed to be happening. Because these eating disorder essays seemed merely to reproduce what I assumed my audience would already know about the subject, they did not fit one of the conventions of research, that it should contribute something "new," previously unnoticed, something unusual (Newkirk, "Narrative Roots"). The teachers I talked with confirmed that most papers on eating disorders seemed the same, to the extent that they had moved into many instructors' lists of essay tropes—the death of a friend, the night we got drunk and were caught, the boyfriend story, the abortion paper.

Wanting to find the unusual, I did not consider the usual as significant, and, like Katie Roiphe, almost dismissed these textual representations as "ineffectual tropes." Without ignoring these responses, I began to wonder what else these similarities might mean, and (at the risk of casting myself as a hero in my research story) I did begin to posit some interpretations. But from the beginning these particular essays have been difficult to study, almost as enigmatic as their subjects are to other researchers.

The primary focus of this chapter will be an exploration of the patterns I've noticed, especially in terms of one particular student's writing and revision of a course essay. Although I will be reading this student's essays with the same analytic approach I used in the previous chapter, I will focus more on the choices the student made within the framework of her writing class and on the responses she received from her instructor, constructing a case study that begins to address my research questions about pedagogical
context (questions I take up in even more detail in the next chapter).

Typically pathologized and visible primarily through psychotherapeutic discourses, anorexic and bulimic women seem to write about their bodies more frequently, instructors have told me, than do women who have been physically or sexually abused, but like the students whose essays I read in the previous chapter, these young women also create polyvocal texts where they appropriate various interpretive frames to "piece together" identities and conflicting notions of truth about their ravaged bodies and senses of self. The bodily violence anorexic and bulimic women experience may seem significantly different from that of sexual and physical abuse—and in many ways it is—but all are produced by similar kinds of power. The gendered and oppressive nature of sexual abuse has been well theorized, particularly among feminists, and even in the most subtle forms of such abuse (like fondling or psychological manipulation and seduction), it is fairly clear that this behavior is about violence. But as Vikki Bell argues in her work on incest, Foucault, and the law, it is important to realize that "violence is often unnecessary: powerful groups or individual do not need to resort to violence" because power works most effectively, as Foucault asserts, when it cannot be seen (59). As with physical violence, the fear and unpredictability of sexual violence (especially within long-term, intimate relationships) work like Foucault's panopticon—just a gaze reinforces the discipline and teaches the woman the proper and submissive attitudes, gestures, and understandings of herself as a female (Bell 68-69). Violence against women is not deviant behavior, feminists argue, it is part of the same process that creates "subservient femininity [as] the norm" (66-67).

An anorexic woman is arguably the embodiment of this panoptical power. an
internalization of this violence and subjectivity where physical and sexual abuse are no longer necessary to accomplish the same goals. Feminists like Sandra Bartky have come to see eating disorders as continuous with such violence and its intersections with gender and power, and some psychological studies have posited that sexual and physical abuse can be precipitous factors to eating disorders. In studying students who have written about anorexia or bulimia, then, I am considering another example of young women who, consciously or not, make the disciplinary nature of femininity manifest in an institution that has traditionally participated in reinforcing such subjectivities.

**Textual Features: Making a Body Visible**

In her historical study of the changing meanings of food-refusing behavior among young women, Joan Jacobs Brumberg describes various mediums of popular culture that communicate information about anorexia nervosa, from the high-profile death of Karen Carpenter, to Debbie Boone's story of binging and purging, to various fictional and non-fictional texts. In the adolescent fiction of anorexia, Brumberg argues, is a "typical anorexia story":

> These stories are nearly formulaic: they emphasize family tensions and the adolescent girl's confused desire for autonomy and control, but they do not advance any particular interpretation of the cause or etiology of the disease. The plot almost always involves an attractive (usually 5 feet 5 inches), intelligent high school girl from a successful dual-career family. The mother is apt to be a fashion designer, artist, actress, or writer; the father is a professional or self-made man. In two of the novels the central characters say they want to go to Radcliffe. (16)

The young girl starts out wanting to reduce her weight because she notices that slenderness is valued in young women, but eventually "ordinary dieting becomes transformed into a pattern of bizarre food and eating behavior that dominates the life of the central character"
(17) This behavior disrupts friendships and worries her parents, and usually the mother is the one who refers the young woman to professional help. Despite their purposes of providing information and warnings, Brumberg argues, these stories stop short of depicting the graphic realities of the disorder, the "classic battle for control that absorbs so much time and energy in psychotherapeutic treatment" (16) and the painful process of uncertain recovery (17).

Unlike these fictional representations, the personal testimonies of women like Debbie Boone and Jane Fonda are quite graphic about how agonizing the recovery process is, and they offer more disturbing and concrete details about the woman's relationship to food. Since the fictional texts are evidently endorsements for professional treatment, one might expect student essays to have more similarities with these non-fictional testimonials. However, only three of the nine essays I received emphasize the life-threatening consequences and the enormous strain of recovery. The rest tend to elide the more dangerous consequences, like heart problems, blackouts, and death, and often the writers summarize their "recovery" in one sentence. In one, for example, the writer (through Kim Chernin) claims dispassionately that anorexia nervosa "is an extremely dangerous disease." but she details the less life-threatening consequences:

You have a preoccupation with food, retreat from your social life, from classes, from activities, and exercise profusely. Much time is spent reading over calorie and fat intake charts, and measuring and weighing out food portions (Cherin 21). Your mind becomes obsessed with one thing: food.

Her teacher has written the word "fatal" in the margins by this paragraph, but nowhere in the paper is there evidence of how dangerous anorexia can be (possibly because Chernin's own comments use a euphemism to describe the effects: "In severe cases it brings
development completely to an end" (21)). As this paragraph suggests, her essay focuses on
the ways a distorted body image impacts a young woman's relationship with her body and
with her friends. The most serious consequence for this writer seems to be amenhorrea: in
both of her drafts she talks at length about her period ceasing and the concern it evoked in
her mother. The last sentence of the essay, in fact, emphasizes her point: "My whole
cycle is disrupted and I do not know if I will ever get a regular menstrual period again."

In general the papers I received follow a plotline similar to that of the fictional
adolescent narratives Brumberg describes: they describe how the writer started either to
purge or restrict her food intake, what prompted this decision, the measures she took to
conceal what she was doing, the impact this behavior had on alienating her from her
friends and family, the physical changes she went through and how others reacted, how she
was discovered and by whom, and how she recovered. These writers pay close, detailed
attention to the particulars of their rituals (hiding tupperware containers in a closet for
vomiting) and of their bodies (visible ribs, sunken breasts and cheeks, calloused fingers),
noting at intervals how much weight they have lost. In some cases the essays are intended
as warnings. The writers often told me they hoped someone else might be dissuaded from
succumbing to the "addictive" cycle of food restriction and weight loss. If the essay
involves research, it usually offers two interpretations of why anorexics or bulimics become
so obsessed with food: a psychological interpretation that argues these women desire
control, associate food with emotions, have low self-esteem, and struggle to become
independent from their families; or a cultural interpretation that links media images of
women, the culture's attitudes toward thinness and obesity, and women's desires for these
ideal bodies. Like the essays about sexual abuse, these texts all appropriate various
discourses that structure what can be said about the experience and how.

In a majority of these essays the writers situate themselves between two types of
images, that of the model and that of the anorexic or bulimic. These texts tend to rely on
dominant understandings of the condition as a way of making the disordered body and its
identity visible (although others do not even mention the terms "eating disorder,"
"anorexic," or "bulimic"). Take the following introduction to a narrative:

In our generation today, I feel that many females experience an eating
disorder at some point in their life. It's my belief that the reason why women are so concerned with their weight is insecurity, men, and society. Women strive too much to make themselves resemble the models they see in magazines and on television. It is believed in women's minds that being thin is what beauty is all about. Some women lose weight to either impress men or to fit in a tight dress. I think females are so obsessed with losing weight that they either starve themselves or purge after eating. These diseases are known as being anorexic or bulimic.

Throughout my life I have dealt with the disease bulimia.

In this paragraph women are either striving to be like models or are becoming anorexic/bulimic—the first leads to the second. And, because she can assume her audience has heard of eating disorders before, this writer gives a thumbnail description of what they are—starving oneself or purging—and why they occur—insecurity, men, and society. She uses, in fact, what she assumes her audience might already know about eating disorders to carve a space for her own narrative. She can talk about her own experience now because she has tapped her audience's image of the "eating disordered," a kind of woman now acknowledged by authorities of all kinds. Her experience has been made visible by these authorities (who no longer need to be named)—she is not alone, she is not odd, she is part of a "tradition" established by the publications of her "stigmatized" group.
In her analysis of the discourses of women's health and body reduction, Carole Spitzack argues that the image of the model is part of the disciplinary mechanisms of femininity because it "promise[s] a version of completion that plays out as repeated displacement, an undermining of identity in order to achieve identity." In other words, when a woman looks at a model, she sees what she lacks, "prompting a desire to resist one's own life." Because "woman" has meant lack, deficiency, disease in Western culture, the ideal set up by the model serves to reinforce a woman's sense of deficiency while also promising health and wholeness if she engages in the bodily discipline of femininity (as Bartky asserts, she is both subject and master). If she buys the products that claim to help her control and resist whatever weaknesses she has, then she further acknowledges her lack, her "deficient identity" (156). Part of what keeps women displacing their identities in this way, Spitzack argues, is that "health is constructed as the precondition for an emergence of identity. Prior to health women are invisible, empty, devoid of desirability; after, women are representationally complete, marked clearly, identifiable" (157). In other words, models (read "healthy women"/ "normal") are visible, fat ("diseased": "deviant") women are not. In gazing at a model, then, women do not "engage in a narcissistic gaze of identification," as some have argued, but they look on as outsiders. The model becomes the norm women internalize, the ideal they are judged by within the disciplinary power of femininity.

Because confession serves to internalize panoptical power, creating subjects who police themselves by internalizing the gaze of a judge, women are expected to confess their deviation from this norm of the "healthy" woman before they can even become healthy.
The confessional relationship and its operations have considerable relevance for an understanding of women's body experience. As outsiders to dominant culture, women are represented as deviant and as persons who are held accountable for their wrongs, who must "display" their imperfections. Women are often expected to testify openly to deficiencies or "sins. Further, women are promised greater self-knowledge through confessional behavior. . . . Through a speaking of one's deepest thoughts to a relational partner, a woman becomes wholly visible and known to herself and to the social body. (Spitzack 61)

In confessing, a woman attempts to readjust herself to dominant social values and maintains the dichotomy that associates women with deviance, irrationality, excess, and men with normality, rationality, adequacy. Within this framework, these students' essays participate in the confessional nature of women's health discourses, and the image of the model serves as one of the catalysts for the initial confession that begins the weight loss and cycle of violent discipline. And with the confession comes a continual displacement of identity. However, such confessions of being eating disordered obscure the sources of power that produce this self-abuse, blaming the woman both for being inherently deficient and for abusing her body. This severs the cause-effect relationship between having a deficient identity and needing to be punished for it.

If the image of the model in these student essays serves to enact this continual displacement of identity, then what role does the image of the eating disordered play? What kind of identity does it allow these women to assume? Like the hysteric body of the nineteenth century, the anorexic body commands attention, a degree of power, and poses the threat of the irrational, the disordered. It is also a body "deadened, erased, in the creation of replicability, in the 'promotion' of feminine beauty as liberation from the bodily" (Spitzack 160). It is certainly an achievement of what Spitzack describes as the desired female body—Poe's argument that "the most poetical topic in the world is. unquestionably.
the death of a beautiful woman." The more I thought about these student essays through Spitzack's analysis, the more I wondered if the most likely kind of body to be written in the composition classroom would be the disordered one: it enacts the necessary confession of deficiency endemic to women's health discourses, describes the achievement of displaced identity, and illustrates the culturally desired female body where health and disease are interchangeable (to be like a model/healthy woman one must become anorexic/diseased).

When the young women I studied wrote about their own experiences with their unruly bodies, they could do so in part because the discourses about eating disorders offer another kind of visible identity, one that further displays the diseased female body and demands to be confessed. At the same time, however, these students' essays explore and illustrate the contradictions within these discourses of femininity, demanding attention to their pain, protesting, at times, the boundedness of feminine identity, and asking what other options they might be given.

"Reality Bites": Memoir

One of the handful of women who were willing to talk with me about their writing was Kristen, a first-year student in an honors Freshman English course. Like many of the writers I worked with, Kristen begins her personal essay about her struggles with weight by describing how "healthy" she was, then what prompted her to focus on her body's size, and eventually concludes with how she "recovered" (see Appendix B). This crisis-resolution trope works well in these narratives because anorexia and bulimia are considered "disorders," "pathologies," signs of a similarly disordered mind that needs to be normalized. The resolution these writers aim for is a pattern of eating "well-balanced" and "healthy"
foods three times a day, an ability to perceive their body not as "full of fat" but as "just right," not in need of extreme control.

Kristen's essay combines narrative and expository conventions: her first paragraph summarizes the points she will make (her frustrations with being heavy, her difficulties finding friends to "judge you on your inner being," the ridicule she suffered, how she decided to lose weight). The body of the essay then narrates each of them. At the end of the essay, she talks directly to the reader to give advice about losing weight in a healthy way and accepting the body one has. At various points in the text she makes broader assertions about the role of the media and culture in shaping "our" sense of our bodies. Each of these gestures suggests what Kristen assumes about her role as a writer in relation to her audience: as an authority on the subject (by virtue of her experience), she needs to explain and support with details the handful of claims she is making about what happened to her, all in an effort to warn and advise others. Her status as a survivor strengthens her credibility, and her uncertainty about how well recovered she is adds persuasive power to her warnings about learning to love one's body.

Prominent in this draft is the process Kristen describes of realizing her body is a signifier. In first grade she is called "Miss Piggy," "Fatso," or "Chubby": "It was as if I had lost my real identity," she writes, an identity that hadn't accounted much for her body size as a "problem." By seventh grade she came "to the conclusion that weight really does matter to others," and in this case it was a boy to whom it mattered. After she asked him to go to a dance with her, this young man said he wasn't going with anyone, then decided to go with one of her "skinny" friends. She views her body as the "problem," and later in the
draft this perspective is reinforced when she describes how many boys began asking her out after she went from a size 14 to a size 5. Her initiation into school brought a sense of bodily shame and created a dissonance between her own sense of self and what others interpreted from her corporeal self. Susie Orbach argues that this paradox of conflating the body and the self and yet seeing them at odds is at the core of women's struggles with eating disorders, at the core all of women's relationships with their bodies. Kristen learns that her body is a text that can communicate and can be used to manage relationships she desires with both men and women. In controlling the language of that text she is able to trade body fat for attention.

After she describes being rejected by this boy, Kristen immediately makes a general statement about "society," the only move in the essay that connects her feelings and behaviors to more abstract ideas or cultural trends:

Society makes us self conscious of our bodies. We are programmed to believe that skinny is beautiful and fat is ugly. This is what leads many to anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Models in magazines supposedly have the "perfect shape." We all strive to get this form, but who is to say what this so-called shape is.

Like many of the essays I received for this study, Kristen's tries to explain the cause of her disordered eating by blaming society and the media, particularly representations of female models. This argument elides the role that masculine values play in objectifying women, in conflating their bodies with their identities and worth, something Kristen has just illustrated in the paragraph before. The only indication that she questions the forces that have affected her is in the last line of this paragraph, but she does not pursue this criticism, either here or in the next draft. Interestingly, in her researched essay she leaves out the story about being rejected for a slimmer girl. Men figure in her story primarily as admirers of
slender bodies, flocking to fragile flesh as if to reward young women like Kristen for taking up less space. She does not question this characterization, but directs what anger she expresses toward the disembodied and dispersed power of "society." She may not be willing to identify herself with the feminist values implied in critiquing the role of patriarchal values in eating disorders, for many reasons, and her teacher may choose not to explore these issues with her. Often the arguments students use that blame society or the media serve to ignore the more threatening feminist analyses they want or need to avoid.

In Kristen's terms, her decision to lose weight was "an overnight transformation."

"I woke up one morning and told myself that I was sick of being overweight, and was going to do something about it. From that day on my life changed forever." Self-motivated, determined, committed, the agent of her own destiny. She is responsible for the happiness she feels after losing so much weight, and the shock of her friends and admiration of the boys just adds to her motivation. But soon this happiness seems less secure because she fears gaining back the weight. This fear prompts her to skip meals and exercise rigorously. As she describes this process she compares herself to an anorexic and lists the "tell-tale" signs. In doing so she makes a move that is common in many of the essays in my study—she uses a generic figure of the anorexic to compare herself to, to make her struggles with eating and controlling her body's needs visible, legitimate, worthy of attention. She chooses to interpret her desire to lose weight, her rigid control of hunger and exercise, and the "unnatural" changes in her body (like amenorrhea) as an eating disorder, and she explores no other interpretations. A body that has been reshaped to signify her desirability as a sexual being has also come to signify disease and disorder, both
physically and psychologically. While trying to mold herself into what she says is a media image of an attractive woman, she also molds herself into what the media, academia, medicine have defined as the disordered body.

This latter image, in fact, is what enables her to construct a narrative about her body that fits into the crisis/resolution plot and the thesis/support structure, to see her experience and her body as a problem to be solved, to be analyzed, to be proven by its consistency with this dominant definition of women who have eating disorders. Because she can rely on these discourses to structure and give purpose to her writing and her role as a writer, she is able to build a degree of authority for giving advice to the reader. As a body, she seems able only to inscribe herself with the disciplinary discourses that define a particular image of femininity, as both a passive receiver and an active inscriber. But as an author of this essay, she is able to become an analyst, an interpreter of that body who can also see the dangers her other self has imposed. This role, this subject position, has been defined already by these "interpretive" and "analytical" demands of a college writer (as she understands them) and by the primary role that has been constructed for those who interpret the disordered body.

"Reality Bites": Researched Essay

Not surprisingly, when Kristen adopts the role of researcher, integrating academic research and interviews with friends into her earlier draft, she assumes a distanced, rather impersonal tone. Her first line begins, "Anorexia Nervosa is an eating disorder that afflicts every one in two hundred and fifty girls between the ages of sixteen and eighteen," and she uses this paragraph to define the disease and its causes, listing "family problems, childhood
sexual abuse, and alcoholism" as "triggers." However, she chooses to emphasize that the "major factor in many cases is a lack of self-identity (Chemin 15)," a theme that resonates throughout her essay.

Many escape this emptiness by becoming anorexic. Having an eating disorder puts you in control of your body and your actions. You are able to control the amount of food you put into your mouth at all times. For people who are weak, with a poor self-esteem, this is a self-image booster.

Equating identity with something that can fill one up or leave one feeling empty, Kristen adopts metaphors often associated with food and eating to describe "poor self-esteem," implying that one emptiness can be filled by another literal emptiness. To escape the void of identity, the body needs to be controlled and able to exist without substance. Even in her pose as an objective researcher describing and defining a subject, Kristen unconsciously illustrates the paradoxes and irrationalities of an eating disordered subjectivity.

Yet this argument—that anorexia is connected to a lack of self-identity—is documented from Kim Chemin's book *The Hungry Self*, suggesting this reading may have prompted Kristen's assertions. Kristen cites Chemin's chapter "Identity" yet does not explain what Chemin seems to mean when she says, "I had grasped the idea that my problems with food were somehow related to a struggle for identity" (17). Chemin is describing the effect on her of reading Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, a text that does not make explicit connections between gendered identity and food, but that Chemin says gave her a way of understanding why she felt so empty, unsure of who she was, asking "Is this all?" (16). What Kristen does not articulate is Chemin's assertion that eating disorders are women "telling us, in the only way they know how, that something is going seriously wrong with their lives as they take on the rights and prerogatives of male society."
I can only speculate on why she chose not to pursue this definition in her essay. It is curious because identity is a dominant theme in this revised essay and one she tries to illustrate with her own experience. Yet it is never clear what she means by identity or the lack of it. When I asked her how she decided what research was relevant, Kristen told me, "Most of the stuff that related to me I put in the paper. A lot of it was stuff I didn't agree with or things by the psychologists that really delved into the subject that I didn't really want to get into." Chemin's argument might be something she cannot see relating to her own life, or it might be too "psychological" for the purposes of a college essay, or she might not agree with Chemin's definition. Whatever the reasons, by not commenting on Chemin's definition of identity and its link to disordered eating, Kristen maintains her earlier assertion that "society" and media images of women are to blame for these struggles (not critiquing, as some feminists might hope, the way gender and power produce such dynamics). At the same time, she avoids complex and potentially disturbing psychological analyses of herself that she may not be ready to address, to share with a public and anonymous audience, or to include in a written text that is supposed to be ordered, tight, and devoid of tangents that cannot be resolved. Although readers who might be familiar with feminist and psychological interpretations of eating disorders might see these two essays having more gaps than order, Kristen is carefully choosing, I think, which features of the "anorexic body" are safer to identify with herself and which are not, especially given her audience and writing context.

Kristen doesn't mention the issue of identity again until the third page when she
begins using her own experience as an illustration of what sociologists and psychologists say about anorexia. She restates her claim from her first draft that she became anorexic:

Three years ago I became anorexic. It began with me wanting to lose weight. As a child I was ridiculed by many because of my size and was often referred to as "Miss Piggy," "Fatso," or "Chubby." I was a fairly secure child with self-confidence until the comments arose. At this point it was as if I had lost my real identity. From that point on, my weight was of concern, and I was uncomfortable with my self-image, but it was a while before I actually had the stamina to change it. I knew at this point that weight really did matter to others, no matter what your personality was like.

In her first draft, the ideas in this paragraph are described in more detail, and Kristen expresses how painful it was to be called names and later rejected by a boy with whom she wanted to go to a dance. These responses are deleted from the researched essay, and very few descriptions of physical or emotional pain or suffering are added. What emotions she does express—guilt and her desire to be thin—are all directed at herself and what she "should" be responsible for; little if any anger is expressed in this essay, at least none that is directed at others. This is emphasized more in the passive construction of the line, "my weight loss was of concern," displacing the agents who were concerned and thus their role in her weight loss. Instead her textual voice is rather matter-of-fact and calm, going about the business of comparing the ways her behaviors and concerns paralleled those of the average anorexic. Her text, like her anorexic body, tries to control her emotions. After establishing in great detail her identity as an anorexic, Kristen asserts in her final paragraph that "today, I have finally come to terms with my real identity." She is now "living a healthy lifestyle" but is not "completely cured." How is this "real identity" different from the one she describes earlier? Does she mean she has "accepted" that her body has a particular shape that may not be as thin as a model's? That she is anorexic and will always
struggle with food and body image (much as an alcoholic will always struggle)? Or was the
identity she felt she lost a sense of self not defined by her body? Given Spitzack's
argument, Kristen is certainly caught between the "healthy woman" who can now become
visible and the requirement that she continually confess her deficient identity. Having
confessed, tried the "cure," she is now healthy but still deficient, her identity repeatedly
being displaced.

If Kristen defines any aspect of her identity clearly, it is that of being an anorexic,
and she adds to her earlier draft even more details about how closely she attended to her
body's shrinking size and the amount of food she consumed. Like the writers of some of
the sexual abuse essays, Kristen first narrates her own experience and then concludes her
point with an assertion from an outside source:

The fear of gaining back my weight caused me a few problems my sophomore
year. I began skipping meals and exercising profusely in order to lose more weight.
I started to become anorexic. Every single day I woke up to the realization that I
was not eating but was losing weight. The weight was easy to lose. With enough
willpower I could control my urge to eat. Besides, even though I was constantly
getting hunger pains throughout the day, it was locked into my mind that I was full.
That was the reason my stomach was upset all the time. One of the three areas of
misinterpreted psychological functioning in anorexics is inaccuracy in the way
hunger is experienced (Bruch, MD x).

Both this point and the one that follows do not appear in Kristen's earlier draft, suggesting
that the research has prompted her to notice her behavior in new ways, to see it as
significant and part of a larger pattern. In the next part of this paragraph, Kristen uses the
only sensual details in the essay to describe her desire for and pleasure in eating a cookie:

With anorexics, the mind takes over complete control of the body, and anything
"bad" that they eat, they get punished for. One time after school, after not eating
anything all day, I gave in to my longing for something sweet. The culprit: a
peanut butter cookie. Initially, it tasted heavenly. Each bite tasted like a million
dollars. After I had eaten, though, I felt like a fat slob. It was as if I had gained back twenty pounds. The fat felt like it was swelling up on my body and I felt extreme guilt for it. Major problems characteristic of most anorexics are disturbances in the body image, in the way that they see themselves (Bruch, MD 85).

In both examples Kristen emphasizes her own experience by placing it first and giving it so much more space than the conclusions of authorities, suggesting at least in this section that she views both the personal and academic as interdependent. When I asked her to describe how the research affected her initial understandings of her experience, she talked about her reading as becoming part of community she didn't know existed:

I could totally relate to like a lot of the stuff [Chemin] had [said], and it helped a lot with the paper. I want to read the whole book sometime cause it just was really interesting. It was like, Wow, you know, you're not alone and other people go through this, too.

The research material functions in some ways as a mirror, reflecting back Kristen's experience, but in a way that changes it. In some respects the body she sees in this "textual mirror" is an anorexic one, not the "fat" body she perceives in her glass mirror. Her readings and discussions with friends who have suffered with anorexia create a textual community that enables Kristen to resee herself and understand how her actions affect others. As Chemin says of her own experience reading Friedan,

[O]n reflection I find that there was a book, written by a woman, that helped me greatly during a difficult summer in my early twenties. As it happens, it was not a book about women and food. It did not come right out and tell me that an eating disorder was a serious form of identity crisis. But it scattered seeds, it turned my thinking in a particular direction, it set me dreaming and musing as I made my way through its pages. Reading it changed me in ways I would not then have been able to specify. But that is the way with reading. It gets in under the skin, and there, in darkness, it begins to prepare the work of fully conscious understanding. At the time, one reads and loses oneself in the reading and forgets to look up when the telephone rings, and one is transformed beyond one's wildest hopes and imaginings by this act of slipping into the aching silences of oneself, brought there by another
woman's words. (15-16)

While the research material in Kristen's essay seems simply to restate in more abstract terms her own experiences, it also seems to have changed the ways she now thinks about herself and other women, prompting her to be more conscious of how her own spoken self-criticisms perpetuate the culture's criticisms of women's bodies:

Well, a lot of times you think when you have this problem that you're like the only one, but there's so many girls that go through this and... I'm trying to find a good word for it. It's not like a popular thing but it's becoming like the thing to do now, it seems, which is awful . . . .

Michelle: What [new things] do you feel that you learned either about yourself or about anorexia from doing the research and the writing of this paper?

Kristen: It is like a disease that affects so many more people than I thought it did. I knew it affected a lot of people, but not as many as I thought it did. Another thing I've learned that I didn't really think it affected, was men. I didn't write it in my paper, but, I guess, you know, there are some men that like struggle with it, too. I just learned that, you know, I'm really not alone, and I learned that it was like okay to talk about it, and not to be afraid. And another thing I learned is like, which I can't do . . . you just got to learn to respect your body, cause it's just so harmful for you. But it's just like, once you're in it, once you've gone through it, it's really, really hard to get out of your mindset that, you know, your body looks fine, and, I mean, I know that's how I should look at myself and be happy with myself. There's like this one girl on my floor, and she's a big girl, and, she . . . never, I mean, she has like a face problem and everything, but it doesn't bother her, at all. It doesn't bother her. And she's like, "Sometimes I'll hear you talk and stuff and I wonder if I should worry about myself." And I'm like, "Don't ever say that". I'm like, "I wish I could be like you, I wish I could just be like I'm so happy with myself, you know? and not have anything bother me, or the way I look, or the way my face looks, or anything." I'm like, it's not gonna happen, so I'm like, "Don't ever change because of me." I mean, I'm like, "I won't talk about my body, or anything, or like being disappointed in myself anymore around you, because I mean that's wonderful that you're so happy with yourself." So, even though I've learned also not to always be so like focused on what I look like, [I've also learned] not to always express [my criticisms of my body] to other people, cause some people that aren't self conscious could become self conscious over it just because you are concerned about it. And there are a lot of people that are a lot bigger than you, and that are a lot worse off than you, and so it's like, you know, you have to take that into [account].
Kristen's first essay about becoming anorexic is more self-focused than socially oriented, appropriating and changing a five-paragraph-theme/thesis-support structure to describe why and how she came to starve herself. She re-presents and re-members her body through this generic textual form, believing she is "just expressing herself." When she is asked to revise this essay into a researched paper, she finds that she cannot simply insert information as she first anticipated (as she thought she could just revise her body by cutting and pasting). Instead her reading causes her to re-envision some aspects of her experience and thus to represent them differently, finding them more significant because she has situated them in a public discourse. In turn the five-paragraph-theme structure breaks down, she blends academic claims with the specific experiences of herself and her friends, blending public and private discourses, and she is prompted to change her behavior toward others, especially other women. Kristen's essay becomes a medium for change on the level of the particular.

Classroom Context

Kristen wrote her essay, "Reality Bites," during the first third of the semester in response to what she defined as an "open" assignment, but which her teacher, Becky, defined as a "memoir." According to Becky, the first several weeks of the course she asked students to experiment with "writing in different kinds of voices": a report of an event, a collage or mosaic paper, a memoir. When Kristen turned in her first draft of "Reality Bites," Becky remembers thinking

No, I wasn't uncomfortable, I think I was probably kind of pleased because . . . . I was aware that some students' papers were not doing as much for them, were not giving them as much to think about, and I thought, well at least she is going to think about this, and in some way or other I think it will be good for her to write the
Although Becky doesn't "desire or ask for a confessional kind of personal writing or an autobiographical kind," she does believe that students do a different kind of work when they write about something she hasn't assigned. As students write about subjects they choose, a kind of blending occurs of the attempt to make some sort of sense out of the actual words that are coming to your mind, and also unconscious or previously unrecognized kinds of thoughts or associations, or something will blend. . . . That writing . . . will still provide a kind of meaning that I couldn't impose if I were to assign the subject.

In Kristen's case, the subject of struggling with food and body image seemed, to Becky, to offer the opportunity for such sense-making, for acts of mind that might bring previously unrecognized thoughts together and thus engage Kristen in writing processes Becky hoped students would experience.

Like Janet Emig, Donald Murray, Sondra Perl and others, Becky believes that one way to encourage this writing-as-discovery is to create safe and enabling classroom spaces. During our interview, Becky suggested that Kristen wrote her essay not because Becky assigns or expects "a confessional kind of personal writing," but because the classroom as she tries to define it is "a good place for them to experiment" (4): "Your particular class?"

I asked.

Becky: Well, I hope mine is, but I think our college classes at UNH are a safe environment for those papers, and it's especially safe because we are less concerned with mechanical correctness, we are less worried about modes of discourse, we are more concerned about a personal sense of voice and meaning, and so on. Is that clear?

Michelle: Yes . . . So, do you think then that writing about these topics . . . in your experience it becomes an important part of their development as writers? Or
maybe not a part of their development?

Becky: Oh, no... I can't prove it, but I think it helps their development as writers. I think that they have to work through a stiffness or an awkwardness in a lot of cases—in just trying to get this down on paper, ... but once it is expressed and there's a text they can look at, or a manuscript, then, they have taken a little control over it and given it some language which makes it not part of their body and soul so much, but also something else that they can handle. And it gives us a way to talk about something so that they know, for instance, that they're not alone with it, that it's something they can share, that an instructor can reflect on and say, "Yes, these things happened. Something like this may have happened to me or someone I know," and I think that's a valuable use of language. I told my students for instance, about journal writing after my mother died. I said that it was very important to me when I was going through this funeral business to sometimes just [write to myself] when I felt very alone, for myself in a journal. I think that it's the same thing for them, I think that they may be feeling some pain, undoubtedly they are, and ... I would like them to know that writing as a vehicle for expression is there for them, is available.

Within an environment that does not tap students' negative associations with product-oriented writing instruction, a writer can experiment with the ways language can bind people through shared experiences, can turn a painful and private experience into a manageable one. I am struck by the ways Becky describes writing for the self as both necessarily private—the audience is only the self—and yet necessarily social—the writer represents a painful experience that may have felt immobilizing, but in writing becomes less one's "body and soul" and more a shared experience.

Becky tries, in fact, to vary the kinds of social and private writings her students do, from journal writing to drafts to research essays, and she asks students to decide which writings are to be shared and which private. Although she hasn't had "a paper that compares to such level of intensity [as an essay received by a colleague about a kidnap/rape]," she is concerned about whether some essays that seem too personal should be shared with a student's workshop group. In the past she has tried to address this
concern by asking students to mark essays they do not want shared, but in this particular class she did not do so. Kristen asked her peers to read her draft, and she eventually revised it into her research project for the term. Many students had told me that their peers had responded positively and supportively to their essays, and that essays about such subjects often created a more intimate bond among the students in the class. I was particularly interested, however, in the ways Becky responded to Kristen's essay. Since writing teachers were the ones who seemed to have varying degrees of anxiety about how to respond to essays that seemed too personal for a public classroom, I wanted to know how particular teachers did respond.

Becky was quite frank about her own struggles in responding to Kristen's essay, and her comments highlight the ways that these student texts seem to reveal the fissures among philosophies of writing as discovery, writing as an initiation into an academic community, writing as a vehicle for "expression" or "critical thinking." They emphasize as well the residual effects from nineteenth-century writing instruction when, as Susan Miller argues, the body of a student was scrutinized through his writing as grammar errors served to convince a student of his flaws, aligning him within the proper distinctions between high and low culture, high and low class (57). In the twentieth century, however, this clinical (panoptical) power is feared to have extended to students' psyches, as well.

From Becky's perspective, Kristen's essay was rather short and "not a real reminiscence sort of paper": "It wasn't very evocative, it was clear she didn't have any hesitation in writing about it, but . . . there wasn't a lot of depth in it or a lot of feeling in it at that point." As I talked with Becky about Kristen's essay, I heard a similar kind of
ambivalence about how she should respond that I had heard with many other teachers.

While she didn't describe herself as uncomfortable with an essay on anorexia, she said she did feel cautious about the kinds of questions she asked Kristen.

I remember asking her some questions about some paragraphs to try to get her to talk more about what came out of this. I wasn't evaluating the paper for her, but I wanted her to fill in more—for example, I wanted to get a sense of what understanding she had of various kinds of social or cultural influences that might have affected her. She said that it had been caused because she had been too fat as a child, that she had eaten too much as a child for instance, and everyone told her that her baby weight would go away and it never did... That seemed to be the limit of her understanding at that point, and so, I wanted to test that, I wanted to get a sense of where she was with that, of whether she saw that there were other issues. And there's another illustration—after she first began to diet bigtime, went back to school in the fall, noticeably thinner, she had a comment that, I can't remember the exact words, that the men were really attending to her, and I asked her probably a couple of things about [it], just to see where her understanding was of that, too, because I really wanted to know. I wanted to place her in relationship to how sophisticated her understanding was of this. And one other thing she said was she had some friends who seemed to be [anorexic or bulimic], and one or two had revealed to her that they were having eating disorders, and she had a friend who had been sent to a treatment center or hospital or something out of state and, that she was ejected from this facility because she wouldn't eat. And Kristen said, "That doesn't seem right." So, I had the sense that she didn't have a very mature understanding of this, that even though her mother had, as she reported in the first paper, that her mother had gone to the doctor with her, that what I was reading didn't seem to me as psychologically mature as some of the things that I have read about the disorder. So... I didn't want to impose that on her. I didn't want to give her a take on this disorder that I had, but at the same time, I kind of wanted to reflect that it was not, as a piece of writing, that it was not as thoughtfully developed as it could have been. I don't know if I was successful at that or not. I think I told her that it was an interesting subject and that I had thought all of my life a lot about eating, and had had fluctuating weights and understood what she meant about women's concerns about not being satisfied with their appearance.

Becky doesn't want to impose, as she says, her own understandings of the disorder, but she does want a degree of maturity and depth to the essay that isn't there. In our discussion Becky defines these qualities in terms of how well Kristen seems to understand and appropriate some of the dominant interpretations of eating disorders, particularly those...
from feminist and psychotherapeutic discourses. Interestingly, Becky believes she would be "imposing" an interpretation if she prompted Kristen to pursue some of these discourses, but, as she explained later in our talk, she wouldn't feel that way about a student who is writing about his faith in Biblical authenticity. She calls this a problem for her as a "critical reader."

What I do find a problem for me as a critical reader of such a paper is, for example, if we were writing about a subject that was not a disorder. For instance, I have a student who is writing about the authenticity of the gospels in the New Testament, and I pursued that logic right down to the period and comma, you know. I was able to talk with him very pointedly about the reasoning that he was using. But I am reluctant to take this young woman and say to her, "Look you haven't written about your parents. You've written about the parents of your friends, and the role that families can play in causing these disorders," but now I feel that as a writing instructor I want to or I'm uncomfortable—I feel I need to pull back. I don't feel that I'm capable or entitled to drive through the middle of [this]. I can present her with the question of causes, I can problematize by saying, "Gee, is childhood eating the only cause?" and she can answer, "No, families can be a cause," and she can write that, but I don't feel able to go beyond that at this point and say to her, "What about your mom? Where's your mom in this paper?" "Well, my mom took me to the doctor because my mom could see that I didn't have my period." "Oh, she was the heroine, then, your mom?" You know? So I don't feel comfortable to do that.

Michelle: Tell me more about why that is.

Becky: Well, I think that she will have to understand that herself, and perhaps she already does understand that. And yet it seems to me that if she were to bring it up, if she were even to write in here, "I notice that I haven't written anything about my parents, or my mom did nothing to disturb me" or something, then I might be able to ask about it, but the absence of her mother makes me feel that it's private territory. It's possible that for me to, the first word that comes to mind is pry, might be more emotional stuff or psychological stuff than—I don't know therapeutic discourse—than I can impose on her as her English teacher. (Okay, yeah). I feel a line and . . . I guess I think that this is an issue of her stability, and that she should be able to extend it to me and I should then be able to respond to it, but I don't think that I should take a stance that would challenge her.

Although the psychological theories that have explained eating disorders are as "rational and logical" as those that have questioned the authenticity of biblical texts, Becky suggests
here that one is more potentially destabilizing than the other. Regardless of how valid this understanding might be from a psychological perspective, this distinction highlights again how unsettling fragmented identities and bodies, in this case, can become for writing teachers. Becky creates spaces in her course for students to write without the need for critical reflection (as she describes it in this excerpt), yet she is uncertain how to respond when the student brings her reinscribed body out of that space and into a more "rational" one.

What Becky does do, however, is share her own struggles with similar issues, disrupting the power imbalance between her and Kristen and opening an opportunity for connecting as women, not simply student and teacher. At the same time, she sets aside her power to compel Kristen, as it were, to make connections between her experience and various interpretive frames and thus make her essay more effective. She respects Kristen's choice to keep private what she chooses, distancing herself from the potential role as receiver of a confession, exerciser of disciplinary power. While she does have knowledge of a particular set of truths about Kristen's violence to her body, she chooses not to assert those. As I argued in the previous chapters, the truths that have been privileged in American culture about how to understand and explain various kinds of bodily violence dominate how many of us might read student essays about these experiences and seem to leave few alternatives for students to revise, construct, or respond to them through the frames of their lived experiences. In this situation Becky is not satisfied with the only options for responding she seems to have, but she has no other kinds of responses to call on with confidence.
When I asked Kristen to tell me about how Becky responded, Kristen focused primarily on what Becky seemed to praise and encourage. As Kristen remembers it, Becky liked her essay because she was being courageous in writing about something so personal:

Kristen: Well she just really liked the paper, she said, and she liked how it was so personal, and how I went into it, and she thought it really great that I could write something about that, how I could write about what I went through, because she knew like it was a hard thing to write about. And especially since it happened to you, and, like not to a friend or something. And so she just said it was great that I was able to open up and talk about it. Cause a lot people, they won't really write personal things about themselves. They'll write things about other people in our class, or they'll write about their family, and things like that, and, you know not a lot of people really go into topics that like anorexia, or, just any other form of disease, so she just thought it was you know, good that I had gone into that kind of a subject.

Michelle: Does that make you feel pretty good?

Kristen: Yeah, it made me feel really good. Yeah, both these papers, it's made me feel really good because she just really liked them. And like in the beginning, some of the papers I'd write [I would struggle with them], cause we had like assigned topics that we had to write on a certain topic. I like to write my own thing. You know, a couple of the beginning ones I knew she thought were okay, but they needed improvement. And then these, I was just really happy with because she really liked them, and it just made me feel good.

For Kristen, this paper signals a significant change in her work for the course, and she describes Becky's response as part of the process of affirming her belief that writing on "her own thing" will produce better writing. As a writer she figures herself here as brave and thus as an improved and more effective writer. "[W]hen I have something like that it's so much easier for me to write," she said,

because I can just express myself. And I could have kept on writing more and more about the topic, cause I enjoyed it, and I think it's a lot better. Sometimes I know you need to have a focus, and you know teachers need to say, "Okay this is what I want you to do"—if you don't do that, then, you know, everyone will just always do their own thing. But I think this was a good break, just to feel to write what you wanted to write on, and, I know I work better that way, write more freely.
and express myself a lot better.

Willing to grant writing teachers the authority to maintain some order in a class by creating structured assignments, Kristen nonetheless believes that her free choice of subject fits her learning and writing styles better. If everyone in the class were to do this, though, it might not be such a good thing. Yet Kristen wants to take a chance at this opportunity for "disorder."

While Kristen describes this essay as pleasurable because she could "just express myself," her drafts and her interview with me suggest this is not expression for the sake of speaking only to the self. She is quite aware of her audience, of the power she hopes her words will have to affect others, and of some of the dominant ways of speaking about eating disorders. When I asked her if anything in particular from the class prompted her to write on this subject, she said,

it was just... a topic that I just decided to write upon, and that class is on personal essays. It just was like a subject that I knew I could write about and I knew that I could maybe help others even though I didn't know if anyone else was going through it in the class or anything... It's just a good topic to inform others about the dangers. It's something I liked writing about. I mean, because I like helping others, and I don't what others to go through what I had to go through. And, like, this didn't occur to me until after I wrote the paper, but, there is a certain girl in my class that— I really don't think she's anorexic, cause, I mean I've seen her eat before, and I've seen her at the dining hall or whatever--but she looks so anorexic. I mean, she's just skin and bones, and, just there's not a piece of meat on her body. And so after it occurred to me, I was like, Wow, I don't know if we are going to read them in class or anything, but I thought it might be good just for her to read. I don't know if she is, some people, that's the way they are, but she just really appears to be anorexic.

Like so many of the students in my study, one of Kristen's purposes and motivations for writing about her experience is the hope that someone else might not have to struggle with the same issue. Because she has friends who have struggled with this and who have come...
to her for advice, she can envision an "embodied" audience and can assume a position of authority as "advice giver." She agreed to talk with me, in fact, because she saw my research as an extension of her own project. She believes that language has consequences in social and political terms.

But what rhetorical choices does Kristen make about representing her body and experience as she tries to achieve these socially transformative goals? When I asked Kristen if, as she wrote her first draft, she was conscious of having to write it in a particular way because she was in college and would be sharing it with others, she answered by describing her assumptions about her audience:

Maybe a little bit in the beginning, cause, you know, first it was like, okay, this is like a personal essay, and I'm writing it about myself, and I thought I might have to read it in front of the class. So at first I was like, Well, maybe I shouldn't put this in, or maybe I should, but then like I was like, Well, you know, just like express how you feel, and it's like don't worry about it, and, you know, it is college and so other people shouldn't take offense to, not offense, but you shouldn't be embarrassed by what you say anymore. Like in high school it'd be different, you know, but it's like you're in college now.

Michelle: Why is that? What's different for you between college and high school that they wouldn't do that?

Kristen: I don't know, I just think like in college people are just more mature, and it's like, in high school everyone was immature and just topics like that, I just wouldn't want to talk about like in front of like a bunch of people, and people that I wasn't really close to. And, like the guys in my class in high school were so immature, and I wouldn't feel comfortable talking about a topic like that with them at all, so. And like another thing, some people would want to talk about [this to] people they know well, but, for me, I wouldn't mind talking about it because I don't know these people that well that are in my class, and so it's not like they can really make judgments on me, or anything. So, it's not like I see them every single day, so it's different, I think.

Contrary to what many of the teachers I interviewed believed about why students wrote about such issues, Kristen chose to write about her eating disorder not because she felt a
sense of trust and community with her peers, but because she did not. Their roles as college students seem to create a distance for Kristen, a necessary and expected lack of intimacy that should prevent them from making judgments. Her expectations about college, college students, and the writing demanded there enabled her to write about a personal struggle, about her body, as much because of the impersonal, detached nature of the university as the freedom she felt to express something for herself. One seemed to create the opportunity for the other.

She was pleased, in fact, that her peer workshop group mentioned her essay as one they would consider "good." Their affirmation, along with Becky's, motivated Kristen to continue writing about the issue, and she decided to revise it by integrating research. In her mind, this second draft is better

cause I think I've improved upon the first one, . . . not having to talk about myself anymore, but I'm talking about what others have went through, like some of my friends went through, and I'm also giving information from books, too, like about the topic. So I think this is a definite improvement . . . I just go deeper into it . . . . Basically what I knew in the first paper was just what I went through, but now I know more from what I've read, and from other people, too.

Whether Kristen is trying to tell me what she thinks I would want to hear (as a college writing teacher and researcher) is difficult to know, but she clearly is creating a hierarchy of genres here, asserting that a more effective essay is one that integrates multiple discourses, multiple voices, and makes the individual writer's story less significant. Again she is keeping the personal and the academic in tension, valuing each for different purposes, but not severing them. This is most evident in her first draft, the one Becky found less evocative and compelling than she would have liked, and the one Kristen told me she didn't feel she needed to shape into a particular form or set of conventions.
Consciously or not, Kristen first wrote about her struggles to control her weight in the rather well-controlled and traditional five-paragraph-theme model, illustrating further the way many of these students implicitly blur the private/public, personal/academic dichotomies simply by filling a pre-existing form with the content of their abuse experiences.

**Anorexic Body as Decentered Identity**

I began this chapter by asserting that the essays I received about eating disorders were strikingly similar, and I situated Kristen's essays in relation to these patterns and the cultural discourses they appropriate. I then contextualized this writing within her composition classroom and considered why both Kristen and her teacher, Becky, made the choices they did. Now, however, I want to disrupt my interpretations with a student essay that does not share all of the characteristics I have delineated. Instead of dismissing this piece because it did not fit, or focusing the chapter on it because it was so powerful and unusual, I've chosen to keep it in dialogue with the analyses I've already made, illustrating the unstable nature of any interpretation, as well as highlighting what the other essays may be trying to control and conceal in their more orderly texts. Unlike the other papers in my study, this one was written while the student was still struggling with her bulimia and powerfully illustrates how fragmented, textualized, and entrapped an eating disordered identity becomes, similar in some respects to the decentered identity I argue some sexually abused women experience. Thus it too raises questions about postmodern pedagogies, particularly as it relates to cultural discourses that construct femininity.
A prevailing argument in contemporary critical theory argues that we only know our bodies and conceptualize them through the mediation of cultural constructs (Bordo 35). Bodies are "products of social discourse" known only through the frames created by language and culture (Bordo 35). This theory is poignantly illustrated in an essay I received from a young woman who was still struggling to "beat" her desire to purge while taking an honors composition course her first year. One of a small group of women in this class who wrote about their uneasy relationships to food and their bodies, Jenn wrote the following essay after a friend from this class stayed up with her one night so she "would not give in to the temptations." What is so striking about this piece is how thoroughly textualized the self and the body are, how Jenn's sense of identity is conflated with her body and shaped by nameless voices telling her what to do, how to be. Like the narrator at the end of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," the speaker in this text is fighting "those eyes" that gaze so ominously, and yet is almost abandoned to their definitions of her and her body. And, like Gilman's narrator, the speaker portrays the doctor and the other female character, Jenn's mother, as insensitive, intrusive, and controlling. Trying to free the woman behind the paper, she entraps herself even further, and the written text illustrates postmodernism's wild subject, a decentered, socially mediated, discursive self:

Those Eyes

They got the best of me tonight. I thought I had finally found the strength to control them but I guess I was wrong.

When I came to college I told myself that I was not going to do it anymore. That I was going to be healthy. That I was going to be like everyone else. I told myself that I was stronger than they were. For the first two weeks I did everything I was supposed to. I put fat and calories in my stomach and kept them there. I
worked my muscles until my muscles started to take over the room that had been occupied all of my life. But tonight I was weak.

I went to dinner and I could feel them. They were watching me. I have felt their stares many times before. I had been ignoring them. I had been strong. I was showing them that no one could control me. I was telling myself that I could do anything I wanted to. But, tonight they were looking through me. They were seeing inside me. They found a weak spot and made it grow.

No one else can see them. If I told anyone that they were there everyone would think I was crazy. They do not have blood running through them. They are not composed of bone and flesh. They are real only to me. They watch me day and night. They never sleep.

Sitting alone in my room with the door locked and the shades drawn I feel them watching me. They scrutinize every move I make. Telling me that I am not good enough without ever speaking a word. They are a part of me. A part that exists outside of my body but in my mind.

It is because of them that there is no curvature in my spine. Even when I am alone in my room and trying to relax my spinal chord must be straight. My head must be held high. My legs have to be crossed. When crossing my legs the top one must never rest completely on the bottom one. Allowing this to happen causes the fat to spread sideways instead of hanging down. Legs that are crossed with all the weight resting on the bottom leg look fatter they tell me. You look more confident when your head is held high they tell me. Your spinal chord will be permanently curved if you slouch they tell me. The doctors all say there is not truth to what they say. The people at school say I play the part of a snob. I was just doing what they told me to.

It was always easier to do what they said. To think for myself and to go against them would take more strength than I have ever possessed in all of my eighteen years. I seriously thought they knew what was best for me until I lost all of my friends.

My friends said that I thought I was to good to eat lunch at their table or to hand out with my friends. I did not know how to tell my friends that I did not think that my friends were dragging me down. They said that they were the only friends that I had. I started to believe them. For two years I was without friends who required food and oxygen to live. That is when I first realized that they did not always have the right answers for life’s problems. For example purging after that bowl of ice-cream did not make my crush like me. I have been battling them ever since. I am the only one who ever gets wounds. I am afraid that I will never get a purple badge for courage for all of the wars that I have been in. Most people will never hear of my war.

Thinking for myself was the first battle. When it was over I was covered in bruises that no one else could see. The bruises were inside of me. There were scratches in my throat and pains in my stomach. If I ever told anyone how much the bruises hurt they would twist the knife deeper into me. I was slowly bleeding to
death inside. The doctors gave the wounds names. One was called "Bleeding Ulcers." The other one was called "Gallstones." They told me the wounds were punishments for trying to leave them behind. The wounds were punishments for trying to accept my body the way it was. They told me it was my fault. This is where they and the doctors agree, in a way.

The doctors said it was my fault I had bleeding ulcers and gallstones. It was after my mother complained that I was too young for "such things." She never did call them by their proper names. Sometimes I think that she was afraid if she did use the proper names it would make it real. No one else in my family had ever had "such things." The doctors told me in privacy that the doctors had to tell my mom why I had "such things" because I was a minor. I thought the doctors were going to be sympathetic. I thought the doctors understood. I asked the doctors to tell me exactly why, in their minds, I had "such things." Maybe it was a medical problem I had and not a mental one. Besides, why should my mom get a clarification and not me? It was my body, in a way. We, the doctors and I, spent the next five minutes discussing my diet. The doctors got out a little book and did the simple addition in the doctor's head.

The doctors brought my mother in the room and had her sit down. I was still lying on the table with gel on my belly and a nurse rolling something over it. The doctors did not bother to use nice words. The doctors used easy to understand words and bluntly state the reasons. It is my fault because I lowered my calorie intake to less than one thousand calories a day the doctors declared. "From our calculations," the doctors proclaimed, "she is currently taking in around three hundred calories a day. Some days considerably lower." I believe I eat more than that and tried to explain this but the doctors wouldn't let me. The doctors did not understand after all. The doctors thought it was a phase I was going through. The doctors said I would grow out of it. The doctors said the only sad part about it was I was going to have life long reminders. The doctors prescribed some drugs that had to be taken with food. My mom said the only problem I had as that I wanted to be a size five. She agreed that it was a phase. My mom was on a diet at the time. She had no right to say anything about what size I wanted to be.

They agreed with the doctors. They know that it is my fault but they don't have to tell my mother. There are no laws saying they have to tell my mother. They have no laws at all.

They say it is because I don't exercise enough. They say it is because I ate too much when I was a kid. They say it is because all I did while growing up was watch the television. They say it is my fault because I have the kind of body that if I eat I am going to be fat. They think I have control over that. They if i was smarter I would not have "such things." They say if I was attractive I would not have to worry about "such things." I believe all of what they say. I believe that I would be able to enjoy all the rich flavors that exist in the world if I would never have to taste them backwards if I was not so pathetic in every way.

They control me more than I like to admit. I once thought that when I
wanted them to go a way they would. That was the deal in the beginning. All I had to do was say so and they would go away. I was wrong. Maybe I do not want them to go away, maybe that is the problem.

Although the pronouns "they" and "them" shift meaning throughout the essay, their initial referent is "those eyes." This evokes a nameless, dispersed panoptical power who is trying to control her body and its desires by seeing all and dispensing judgment: "they were looking through me. They were seeing inside me" "telling me that I am not good enough without ever speaking a word." These beings "without bone and flesh" structure her body's movements, admonishing her to keep her spine straight, her legs crossed but not relaxed, her body disciplined into an image of confidence, slenderness, and health. As Sandra Bartky has argued, the female body is subjected to the state's disciplinary power differently from a male's because the female body is made more docile, subjected to ritualized practices that construct an image of femininity, implying the body is deficient and in constant need of self-surveillance (Bartky 64, 72, 75, 65). As in the other essays I've read, Jenn details the rituals and agonizing discipline she subjected her body to, or here was induced to subject it to, in a tone that seems to both admonish and relish how well she accomplished this control and mastery. She is both a master of these rituals and victim of them.

For most of the essay, however, she describes herself as too weak to resist "them," implying some faith in an active, resistant self that could win this war. Who that self is does not become clear; instead we see the selves structured by competing discourses (those eyes) as devouring and then rejecting (purging?) any self that might resist. She says that "[t]hinking for myself was the first battle," yet it isn't clear what the fight was about. On
the one hand, thinking for herself could mean she tried to stop heeding the voices that prompted her to purge and gave her so many "scratches in [her] throat and pains in [her] stomach"; on the other hand, this could mean resisting the doctors, choosing what to do with her body despite their advice. Regardless, the speaker in this piece finds her "thinking self" attacked, blamed for the "wounds" on her body.

As is characteristic of many anorexic and bulimic women, Jenn creates an identity in this essay that is divided against itself, fragmented by the contradictory surveilling eyes that offer seemingly irreconcilable interpretations of her body, her identity, her need to control. It is as if she has walked into a vortex of pre-existing discourses that so thoroughly textualize and discipline her that she cannot sustain the fiction of a self capable of resisting. Those eyes teach her how to shape her body to convey particular messages, and a key element of that shaping is to control/get rid of "fat." The extent to which she "fails" in this control affects how others respond to her and how valued she is: one set of voices, most likely from popular culture, "say it [the fat on her body] is because I don't exercise enough . . . I ate too much as a kid . . . all I did while growing up was watch the television . . . I have the kind of body that if I eat I am going to be fat." If she "were smarter" or "attractive" she wouldn't have to worry about "such things." These lines illustrate the paradox of an eating disordered body, a belief that one has control over the body's hunger and production of fat, and yet that one has no control at all because the body defies such willful definitions. Jenn conflates her sense of self with this control over her body, and yet wants desperately to separate herself from a body that turns against her.

Intersecting with this interpretation is that of the doctors, a set of explanations that
Jenn laces with disdain. On the one hand she calls the doctors' number crunching, diagnosing, and naming of her body's wounds an explanation of her "mental [problem]," when she wonders if it isn't a "medical problem." As a medical problem her "wounds" are not "her fault" but her body's, evidence of how passively she is victim to this unruly mass of cells. Yet all the images she describes of the doctors measuring, probing, treating her body as an object of analysis suggests how thoroughly medicalized the process of interpretation is. Even when she thinks the "doctors were going to be sympathetic," they actually dismiss her problem as a "phase" and, from Jenn's perspective, betray her to her mother. She feels abandoned by the doctors' diagnosis, by her mother's inability to accept the reality of her daughter's body, and the willingness of both to name her body and her thoughts as if she could not. With each of these different notions of truth about her condition Jenn responds as both a victim of their words and a resister. Her ambivalence about how her identity is related to her corporeal body is evinced in the line "It was my body, in a way." Whose body is it, really? And what kind of self is this body writing?

Reading The Body. Reading the Writing

To have a body felt to be "feminine"—a body socially constructed through the appropriate practices—is in most cases crucial to a woman's sense of herself as female, and, since persons currently can be only as male or female, to her sense of herself as an existing individual. To possess such a body may also be essential to her sense of herself as a sexually desiring and desirable subject. Hence, any political project which aims to dismantle the machinery that turns a female body into a feminine one may well be apprehended by a woman as something that threatens her with desexualization, if not outright annihilation.

Sandra Bartky. "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power"

Jenn's essay enacts her body's struggle over what it means to be a female subject in western culture. During a night when she was fighting her desires to purge, she instead
tried to render with words what Bartky might argue is endemic to all women's experiences-
"Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other" (72), and through the extremes of these disciplinary rituals learns to feel shame for the ultimate failure of her body and her will to achieve a docile femininity (72). Yet any attempts to disrupt Jenn's behaviors, to "heal" her, are ultimately threatening to her sense of self, initiating a sense of loss. Her agency has been structured around her abilities to control her unruly body and the space it invades, a metaphor of control and emotional cool like that expected of authors in some writing classrooms—whether the student is admonished to purge tangents, clean up grammar weaknesses, or tighten up the essay's coherence. Unlike many of the essays I received for my study, Jenn's is not neatly organized into an expository or argumentative paper. It is an "essay" in the tradition of Montaigne: it explores, it wanders, it circles back, it comes to no definitive conclusions. Unlike Montaigne, however, Jenn less easily assumes a stable sense of authorial identity and virtually undoes herself. In breaking with more controlled exposition, Jenn might be figuratively resisting her desire to control her body/self. Or her essay might be an effort at protest that readers need to applaud. Yet she may also be reinscribing an identity/body that is so fragile, so weak, that it cannot, conveniently, resist physical or verbal abuse.

How one answers such questions depends on which interpretations of eating disorders one employs. Within some feminist analyses, for example, particularly those emphasizing the role of culture, ideology, and discursive practices, it matters greatly whether Jenn is understood as a passive victim of disciplinary practices of femininity or whether she is enacting a protest of those rituals. To see her as passive reproduces
androcentric constructions of woman as malleable, controllable, waiting to be given an identity, whereas to see her as resisting the very gender codes that threaten to control her is to invert this historical construction. The struggle over the meanings of eating disorders has become a struggle over the meanings of women's bodies, gendered practices, the reproduction of ideology and various forms of oppression, as well as over women's agency and possibilities for resistance. From this perspective, Jenn's essay becomes vitally important to political/cultural projects, and Jenn's writing instructor—how she responds to Jenn and her discursive representations of her experience, her emotions, her body—carries enormous responsibility.

Whether a composition classroom can or should carry such responsibility for the ideological implications of language is an ongoing debate, and one I don't think a study like this can avoid addressing. I know I cannot sit in my office across from an emaciated or bruised young student and avoid asking myself what my responsibilities are. Although the theoretical explanations I have and will continue to use to "read" these students' texts/bodies may seem to remove me and readers from the actual bodies that daily experience such pain, I hope instead they help me argue why we need to take these texts and these students seriously. In speaking their own experiences, bringing their subjugated knowledges into the public and academic space of a writing class, can these students resist the disciplines of femininity? Or, as Carole Spitzack might argue, are their texts reinforcing American culture's "discourses of excess" and their requirement that women confess their diseased and ignorant identities?

Significantly, within American culture the dangers of emotional excess have been
associated with immaturity, loss of control, and a particular kind of "emotional" deviance that are strikingly similar to the qualities associated with eating disordered women. An anorexic body also embodies the stigma of intense, uncontrolled feelings and conflict—America's preoccupation with emotional cool. The feelings this body and self want to purge, however, are the very kinds of "outlaw emotions" that feminists believe can drive critical challenges to discourses of femininity and power. What might it mean to encourage students like Kristen and Jenn to express these emotions in their writing and then connect them—in a critically reflective way—to the values and practices those emotions may critique? Instead of participating in seeing these women as diseased (confirming the "truth" of their confession) and thereby continuing the displacement of identity Spitzack describes, why not ask where else they may exercise their desire for "mastery" and identity? or how they explain the meaning of their survival? Their texts certainly are demanding a different kind of attention than their bodies do—or at least I believe as teachers we need to guard against always seeing them as pathological or deficient—and I think their efforts to "try on" the multiple perspectives on eating disorders are an effort to assume identities different from the diseased ones they believe they have.
CHAPTER 5

"SOMETIMES I JUST WANT TO BEAT THE SHIT OUT OF YOU!":
ANGER AND THE MAKING OF KNOWLEDGE
IN A WRITING CLASSROOM

In the preceding chapters I have been developing a way of reading student essays about bodily violence that recognizes the discourses writers use in representing and understanding their experiences, as well as the historical and cultural contexts within which their essays are situated. These writers challenge the dichotomies between emotion and reason, public and private, body and mind that institutions like the university tend to reinforce, disrupting power relations by asserting their subjugated knowledges and outlaw emotions. Instead of assuming that students who have experienced physical trauma are too unstable to take up academic work (however defined), writing teachers might begin by recognizing the critically reflective, socio-political work these essays enact. At the same time, teachers need to attend to the fragmentary sense of identity many of these students experience and consider the ways writing might enable temporary fictions of coherence and “normalcy” for them—and conversely the ways such identities complicate postmodern pedagogies and theories of subjectivity.

In Chapter 3 I asserted that students often write about bodily violence regardless of pedagogy. Setting aside questions of classroom practice and response, I explored how students are writing about these issues within particular cultural, historical, and theoretical...
contexts. In Chapter 4, I moved from textual analysis to one teacher's response—the assumptions she brought to reading the student's essay, the pedagogical theories that informed them, and the role she saw the student's writing playing in the overall purposes of the course. At the same time, I paid closer attention to the choices the student made in writing and researching her essay. In the present chapter, I continue this case study approach, but I do so from the added perspective of more extensive interviews and classroom observations over a ten week period. This more ethnographic method enables me to compare what students and teachers told me with what I observed on a daily basis, while also exploring potential relationships among classroom dynamics (student-teacher and student-student interactions), course content, and one student's writing on physical violence.43

By following one student through several weeks of her writing class, I hoped to explore two questions: 1) what influence might a particular teacher and pedagogy have on why and how a student wrote about bodily violence? and 2) how might a student with such experience develop as a writer over the term? I cannot, of course, draw direct cause-effect relationships among these factors, but I will argue that it was significant for the student, Ann, to be in a classroom where her teacher, Katerina, encouraged students to choose writing subjects that they felt passionate about and were linked to political and social issues. When she wrote in her first course essay about being assaulted by her boyfriend, however, Ann did not know that Katerina would emphasize a passionate commitment to social change through writing—one that positioned anger as a legitimate motivation for nonviolent political action. Ann's own muted anger surfaced in her first essay, but as the course went
on, it shifted away from her own abusive history to that of other oppressed minorities (African-Americans and the Irish). What was an anger directed at an individual (and not the sociological, psychological, or patriarchal forces that produced the opportunity for such violence) became more directed in her "non-personal" essays to social critique. Although her later essays were less and less about her own experiences, they all integrated Ann's feelings and opinions (particularly her informal response papers to readings or movies) into arguments.

Although Katerina had a rather ambivalent attitude toward "personal experience" essays, her course immersed students in ways of writing and speaking that saw critical thinking, emotion, rhetoric, agency, and the personal/public as interdependent. I focus in this chapter on the particular ways emotion was discussed in class and deployed in Ann's essays because it became clear to me how Ann's sense of agency, her writing persona, and her understanding of this interdependence seemed to build. Of course a student's trajectory in a course is never so linear and "progressive," but I witnessed Ann find a place for her outlaw emotions in Katerina's course that did not sever them from meaning, nor pathologize them, nor set them outside the bounds of a writing class. Katerina did not address emotions as inherently biological and impulsive, either. She challenged her students not to take their emotional responses as "natural" and a-political, but as structured to uphold certain dominant values, thus using her authority to readdress the place of outlaw emotions, for example, in public and rhetorical space and to model an emotional intensity where anger did not necessarily mean oppression, violence, or humiliation.
Ann's Essay: Not So Personal I'd Have a Crisis Writing About It

[When I read it I cried. I was home reading them. There have actually been a few times in conferences where I've lost it because I feel so... which is probably part of the reason why I'm nervous about anything that connects to therapy, because I don't have enough self-control, I think, in those situations to be a good person for that, you know? 

. . . . I have this huge sense of compassion for other people's problems and I tend not to be able to get that across--I'm kind of a control freak and I don't like to be out of control in that way. Especially early in the semester, it makes me very nervous.

Katerina, Instructor

On August 30, 1994, eighteen-year-old Ann handed her Freshman English instructor, Katerina, her response to the first writing assignment of the year: write an essay about something that has affected the person you are today. Ann had not met with Katerina in conference yet—in fact, the class had only met a few times. The writing she handed in described the night of Ann's junior prom when her boyfriend became so angry with her that he tackled her, punching her in the lower back as she hit the ground. As Ann describes him, her boyfriend tried to manipulate her into staying with him by threatening suicide, later telling her "that it didn't matter if he turned out to be a wife batterer, that [she] wouldn't stay with him long enough to see it happen anyway." After the attack Ann became anorexic, losing over thirty pounds, exercising twice a day.

While not the most graphic essay I have received about physical abuse, Ann's piece is chilling in the minimal details she uses to describe the event and allude to the beating she witnessed her mother suffer from Ann's father (it is unclear how frequently this occurred). In her essay she begins and ends with a male figure, the first her abusive and manipulative (now ex-) boyfriend, the second a male friend who was there when she passed out and has, according to Ann, treated her with respect and "made [her] feel like [she] was fun to be with, smart and pretty." Now her current boyfriend, this young man and a young woman
who was also suffering from anorexia help Ann realize that "you have to respect yourself before you can learn to respect others." Like Emily's essay on sexual abuse (from Chapter 3) and Kristen's on her eating disorder (from Chapter 4), Ann's piece ends with this explicit moral or lesson for the reader and seems to do little more than use the crisis-resolution trope to describe the event that precipitated this change. It does not describe how she "recovered," only that "things started looking up when [she] started seeing someone else," a move similar to the other eating disorder essays. She still looks to other men for her sense of self, and it seems she feels recovered because her physical reality has changed—she is no longer anorexic and no longer in an abusive relationship. In glossing how things started to "look up," Ann both protects herself (a functional form of denial) and maintains her emotional cool as she writes about her boyfriend's psychological manipulation and physical violence. The generalities she uses help her accomplish this control. Although her language sometimes betrays this image, Ann constructs herself as active, self-preserving, willing to pull herself out of dangerous situations (whether it's the violence or the anorexia), even as she feels scared, helpless, and guilty.

In the essay below I've included Katerina's comments as they appeared because they are the primary representations of the feedback Ann received. As the epigraph to this section indicates, Katerina cried when she read Ann's essay at home, yet the only comments that suggest how the essay made her feel are the words "This is so scary, Ann." As I will illustrate, Katerina feels uncomfortable responding affectively when she fears her emotions are not in control, and her written comments illustrate how she tries to contain them by focusing on contextualizing Ann's experience and affirming her willingness to
speak. It's interesting that Katerina does not comment on the narrative section where Ann
details the assault and her boyfriend's threats. In her end comments she warns Ann about
how difficult UNH might be for her to adjust to, suggesting Katerina's concern about Ann's
vulnerability. There are no suggestions for revision or evaluative comments about the
quality of the writing. Ann and Katerina are both enacting a dance in this essay of
maintaining emotional control and appropriate boundaries between teacher and student,
personal and public (an appropriateness they are in the process of defining here).

[No Title]

As I sat in my first session of freshman English class earlier on this clear fall
day wondering what I could write about that has affected the person I am today but
that wasn't so personal I'd have a crisis writing about [it], and was still a significant
event, I had kind of a difficult time. Finally I decided to write about a point in my
life when I wasn't very happy with the person I was and how I managed to make it
through that hard time.

Things really started to go downhill for me after I had been
dating the same guy for two years. I found myself always grouchy, I felt
very unattractive, I just had a very low self esteem in general. I feel bad
saying that it was my boyfriend's fault, but he certainly didn't do me any
favors. We began not to get along very well together, and he always
seemed to have a way with turning everything on me, I just felt like I
could never seem to do anything right no matter what I did.

The worst time we had was our prom night. We had a
wonderful time at the prom itself, I had a great time even though I had a bad cold
that night. Afterward, we went out for a walk on the golf course by his house.
The night was chilly and I was feeling exhausted; it was getting late. I asked him if
he could bring me home, but he took this request to mean that I couldn't stand to be
with him. When he couldn't accept that I just felt rotten and wanted to go home,
he grew very frustrated. I felt so bad because I really did have a good time, and I
didn't want the evening to end with him so upset. Raging, he thundered
out into the damp spring evening air:

"Sometimes I just want to beat the shit out of you!"

I couldn't believe that someone I was so close to and trusted for
two years could say that to me. I was so scared. All I could think about was the
time I watched my father hit my mother when I was younger. I felt just as
helpless as I did on that night. I knew I had no way to defend myself. I
asked my boyfriend to just take me home, so we got into the car and he

"Do you think a lot of young
women in our culture
go through this?"

"This is so scary, Ann"

"You poor thing."

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sped along the [town] roads not saying a word. Suddenly he wheeled into a vacant lot and told me to get out and walk home. When I refused, he got out and started to walk toward his house. I found two nickels in his change cup and began to walk to a pay phone so that I could call my mother to pick me up. I hadn't gone very far when I heard the footfalls of my boyfriend sprinting after me. I had just begun to turn around when he plowed me into the ground, prom dress and all. Not only had he ran me over full force, but he drove his fist into my back while he was at it. I was so scared all I could do was stay there, face in the dirt for a moment. I couldn't get over that this was happening to me. I had always heard that the people often trusted the most are the ones that do these kind[s] of things, but I never thought something like that could happen to me.

When I got up, I was so mad. How could someone so significant to me betray me like that? I screamed at him to take me home, that I never wanted to see him again, and how could he do something like that. He got all upset saying that he didn't mean to and then began to make threats that he would hurt himself, maybe kill himself if I left him. Eventually I agreed to see him the next day so that we could talk.

The next day went well until he denied that he punched me in the back. Even after I showed him where his knuckles bruised me, he denied it. After that, he got all upset saying that it didn't matter if he turned out to be a wife batterer, that I wouldn't stay with him long enough to see it happen anyway.

For months after that he made me feel so guilty for pushing him out of my life. I began to lose weight very rapidly, first 4 lbs., then 9 lbs., 23 lbs., and at last 34 lbs. My feet and hands were always purple and I could never feel them. I was exercising excessively. One day I went to work out at the gym with a male friend from school and I passed out on him. Another friend came up to me to tell me that she knew what I was going through, because she was being treated for her anorexia. This was when I realized that something was potentially seriously wrong.

Things started looking up for me when I started seeing someone else. I began to see the guy I went to the gym with that time I passed out. I felt really awkward at first. He made me feel like I was fun to be with, smart and pretty. This man treated me with respect. I felt awkward at first because I didn't believe I deserved to be treated so well. Finally, I am beginning to gain self-confidence and self-respect. I am finally coming to understand what people mean when they say you have to respect yourself before you can learn to respect others. This insight to self respect has been a major factor in defining the person I am today.

You are very brave and very wise to realize all that you have at this point in your life . . .

And it has to come from you, yourself. I think most women go through experiences like this that is why it is so important to write and talk about it . . . Be careful at UNH too because it can be a hard, stressful adjustment here. Just know that you're not alone . . .
In her first paragraph Ann tells her readers much about her decision to write about this incident. It revolves around her interpretation of the phrase "significant event" and her desire to maintain emotional control. The event has to have affected who she is, but not be "so personal [she'd] have a crisis writing about [it]." She implies that of all the events she could have chosen, this one is the least threatening to her, or destabilizing, or unnerving (implying she has suffered worse). It is difficult to know what she means by "crisis," but I suspect she at the very least means not being able to control her emotions, her thoughts, her words. Remembering an event through writing can potentially undermine her control on many levels (as well as evoke pain, re-wounding in a way), and she chooses to protect herself rather than write about something more traumatic for the sake of the assignment. Although I cannot know whether students have a network that tells them to choose painful and dramatic experiences for assignments like this (as some of my colleagues suggest), Ann's essay implies some degree of self-preservation in her choice. Some psychologists argue that survivors of physical or sexual abuse often don't have the ability to distinguish what is appropriate and safe to disclose because the very abuse is their primary education in transgressing boundaries.\textsuperscript{44} Others assert that the unconscious protects itself and will not bring to consciousness something it is unable to manage.\textsuperscript{45} I can't know in Ann's case, but I suspect her use of generalities (alone not unusual for a first-year essay) and the opening discussion of choosing what to write about, are both modes of self-protection.

As Carol Barringer has pointed out in writings from sexual abuse survivors, euphemism and displacement characterize Ann's essay. The last sentence of the first
paragraph and all of the second use general and vague terms that seem to minimize and soften the impact of the experience as well as her anger: "a point in my life when I wasn't very happy with the person I was," "I managed to make it through that hard time," "things really started to go downhill," and so on. As conventional phrases, these words direct readers (and Ann) away from the painful details even as they fulfill an expected move in college writing to begin generally and then move to a specific instance, situating the experience within cultural abstractions most people are believed to share—being grouchy, having low self-esteem, feeling unattractive, and so on. It seems quite an understatement to say she felt grouchy after being with a young man who tried to control her with suicide threats, isolation and jealousy (as I learned from Ann later), and guilt. Even to call his behavior a betrayal is euphemistic. Although she told me during an interview that as she wrote she became increasingly angry, the only direct, explicit anger she expresses in the text comes after he has tackled her. Otherwise we see it buried in words like grouchy and embodied in the self-punishment of starvation and excessive exercise.

In the essay, this weight loss also becomes a way to displace her emotions and understandings of the assault and the relationship—although she realizes something is not quite right about her relationship, she discovers "something was potentially seriously wrong" when another young woman suggests she has anorexia. Her own self-abuse is more "wrong" than her boyfriend's abuse of her. This self criticism supports her earlier statement that this was a time when she "wasn't very happy with the person [she] was," a self criticism that would more justifiably be directed at her boyfriend. Even her claim at the end that she learned to have self-respect and confidence suggests she was the one who
needed to change and to be held accountable for what happened. So although Ann does actively seek ways to protect herself during the assault and eventually separates from this young man, she not surprisingly still extends this agency to also being responsible for what happened. At the same time, grammatically, there are points where her boyfriend has no agency, and Ann casts herself in the object position: for example, in the line "I had always heard that the people often trusted the most are the ones that do these kind[s] of things, but I never thought something like that could happen to me," the first half names a someone who does "things," but in the second half, something is being done to her. Not only is she absent in the first clause and passive in the second, but the perpetrator is generalized first and then totally absent in the second. Ann is a victim not of abuse, or violence, or even pushing, but of "things," and even when the general person who does this is absent, Ann is still a victim.47 As Foucault says, the perpetrator and the violence need no longer exist for the body to become docile and disciplined.

The euphemisms Ann uses are also what David Bartholomae might call commonplaces, conventional phrases that represent shared or common sense beliefs: "I had always heard that the people often trusted the most are the ones that do these kind[s] of things"; when the young woman implied Ann had anorexia, "I realized something was potentially seriously wrong"; and "I am finally coming to understand what people mean when they say you have to respect yourself before you can learn to respect others." She works from popular knowledge about abuse, anorexia, and self-esteem/self-respect, not from psycho-therapeutic discourse, academic knowledge, or legal discourse. These commonplaces function in this essay in two important but quite different ways: They give
her a language for understanding and representing this experience, both to herself and her reader, making it possible for her to write about pain to an audience while seeing herself as strong, confident, and active. At the same time, the commonplaces become heuristic, helping her make significance out of the event as she reflects on a younger self: she was betrayed by a boyfriend who controlled her, became anorexic from the guilt she was feeling, and then learned to respect herself when another young man and woman treated her with respect. All of this happened to teach her how to respect others by beginning with herself.

Ann constructs her identity and self worth as being made and unmade by a man through relationships that produce either self-punishment or self-respect. Learning to take care of herself and develop confidence is certainly important, and as with some of the other women in my study, a community of friends is often significant to that process. Being physically and psychologically weak can hardly lead to self-protection. But the commonplaces Ann uses also maintain dominant beliefs about physical abuse, that males abuse women out of anger, possessiveness, or lack of control (isolated causes), not because they are socialized to dominate females and others considered inferior (social and systemic causes). Her revision ideas also focused on dramatizing more how much of a "jerk" her boyfriend was, emphasizing the individual, non-gendered nature of his behavior (though also emphasizing his agency and responsibility more). In addition, she avoids considering the role her family experience might have played in this relationship (beyond alluding to how helpless she felt in both situations). This is a drama between two people, one of whom becomes irrational and manipulative.
Cultural, Academic, and Familial Contexts

The academic research that has tried to understand and intervene in such violent relationships has posited multiple interpretations, and many of them now take feminist theories into account when trying to analyze male violence against females. What influence these theories might have on Ann's understanding, or the appropriateness of guiding her to them, is a difficult question to answer, but as the experiences of both Nicole from Chapter 3 and Kristen from Chapter 4 suggest, these perspectives might offer Ann multiple identity positions beyond that of victim or victim-blaming. Although Katerina does not direct Ann to texts to read or suggest places to revise, she does emphasize in her course a view of the individual as situated within various systems of language and power that affect knowledge and identity, a perspective amenable to feminist sociological theories about abuse and eating disorders. So, although Ann does not return to this essay or its subject for the rest of the semester, Katerina's pedagogy encourages her to be more critical of social systems, dominant values, and the oppressions minority populations suffer, and thus implicitly encourages the opportunity for Ann to reflect in a similar way on her own situation.

Ann's depiction of her abuse as inflicted by a jealous, narcissistic, and manipulative young man echoes family violence theories which posit the abuser as a man pathologically disposed to violence when triggered by conflict. Psychological theories that try to explain domestic violence (although dating violence is theorized a little differently) argued in the 1960s that a wife's masochism precipitated the abuse and that child abuse was the result of general psychopathology (O'Leary 12). Current theories focus more on predictive
behaviors and personality traits (like aggression, suspiciousness, etc), learned behavior, and
the dynamics of relationships in trying to understand violence, arguing in some cases that
"our society does not appear to shape attitudes of most men and women to accept the use
of violence by men toward women, but some individuals may learn that such behavior is
acceptable." Thus domestic violence can be understood as "a matter of individual
prediction" (O'Leary 24). Countering and contextualizing these individually-oriented
interpretations, sociological theories point to the influence of social class, gender, race, and
ethnicity and argue that although family violence cuts across these lines, it is greater in
groups who are more disadvantaged, especially economically (Gelles 32-33). At the same
time, the family system plays a role, where "the same characteristics [sociologists Straus,
Hotaling, and Gelles] saw as making the family violence-prone also serve to make the
family a warm, supportive, and intimate environment" (Gelles 35). Briefly, sociology has
developed four primary theories to explain family violence: general systems theory, where
violence is not a product of individual pathology but of the systems; resource theory, which
posits all systems rest on the possibility of force that grows greater the more resources one
has; exchange/control theory, which asserts violence occurs when there are rewards for it;
and subculture of violence theory, where subcultures are understood to construct different
meanings to violence (Gelles 36-38). While feminist theories work from many of these
theories, they emphasize that significantly more men are violent towards women and this
emerges from patriarchal systems of privilege and power52 (although women also report
(are reported to) be violent toward their partners, sometimes as much or more than men,
that aggression is usually self-defensive or less threatening than male violence—see Straus.
Linda Gordon is careful to point out that male dominance is not the cause of such violence, but that male dominance is a basis for it (251, 264). A number of feminists have argued that popularized theories of domestic violence, sexual abuse, or the more general state of being codependent move away from understanding how patriarchy and capitalism construct the possibilities for this violence and put more emphasis on "the problem [as] personal pathology, not societal oppression" (Brown 4).

Whichever of these theories one chooses to emphasize will focus accountability for the abuse in different places, and this accountability has important implications for criminal proceedings, individual and systemic interventions, and for the self-concepts of the people involved. Ann's own sense of herself and her responsibility is constructed in the process of writing about her experiences, given the frames she has to "resee" the past. She began, in fact, to make the connections between the prom night, the verbal abuse, and her weight loss in the process of writing this piece, and her anger grew as she wrote. When she looked back on it after four weeks, she was ready to revise her portrait of her boyfriend to focus more on his culpability, shifting her anger away from herself and onto her abuser. This essay, then, while loosely fitting generic constructions of college essays, functions for Ann as a witnessing, as a place to reinterpret her experience, and a space for her to revise her own sense of agency and her ability to protect herself.

In writing it, she told me, she could "think of the words [she] really wanted to use--when you're talking with someone else, you're wondering what they're thinking." Her writing, in Goffman's terms, becomes a way for her to manage what she perceives as a
spoiled identity, controlling what gets revealed (to a degree) and who gets to read it. Her peers did not read this piece, and despite her belief that "it was important to be able to say it," she told me she would not want them to read it. Although she was confused about why she did not want to share this essay, it suggested how vulnerable she felt, especially if she were still sorting through the significance of what happened. Katerina may have been an appropriate stranger to disclose to, but not her peers.

Another reason to keep this experience rather private might have been Ann's keen sense that words could be dangerous and frightening. She rarely spoke in class, and during our interviews she seemed shy and hesitant, a demeanor which became increasingly more at odds with the persona I read in some of her later writings. Her verbal silence corresponded with being voiceless in an alcoholic and sometimes abusive family. The only allusion Ann makes in her essay to her family is the line "All I could think about was the time I watched my father hit my mother when I was younger." She is a witness here, casting her father in the subject position, and in the next sentence she describes her powerlessness as a witness: "I felt just as helpless as I did on that night." In the next line, however, her position as witness and victim merge: when she says, "I knew I had no way to defend myself," she could be referring to her fear that her father would turn on her, as well as to her fear of protecting herself from her boyfriend. The two scenes blend with this line, the past and present coexisting, her father and boyfriend one.53

The two men were similar as well in the way they shamed, criticized, and humiliated Ann, a verbal violence that abuse victims find only works one way, from the more powerful to the less. Both bruised her body and her sense of self with words and
fists that demanded she exist for their needs, to validate their power and existence. Being in college—being in Katerina’s classroom—is an escape from the chaotic and unpredictable family Ann grew up in, but her body language and her speech suggest the degrees to which she has not escaped the residual effects. While certainly wanting to be strong, confident, and assertive—and demonstrating these qualities in her writing—she also seemed fearful and uncertain at times.

Because Ann spoke softly and sometimes hesitantly, I had to fight my urge to fill up the silences while we sat and talked in my office. Given how hesitantly Ann spoke, how often she said "I don't know" between thoughts and seemed to qualify everything with sounds I can only characterize as small laughs, I was not sure what I could ask her, what she would find too intrusive, too painful to talk about. I decided to share with her the experiences that had informed my own interest in and perspective on writing about bodily violence, something I did with all the students I worked with. I did so for two reasons, 1) I did not want them to feel like "subjects" being studied through a microscope by someone who was at best indifferent, but as people working with someone who was empathetic and in that sense, credible; and 2) I was concerned that the painful experiences they were sharing with me made them even more vulnerable than they potentially already were as participants in research, and I hoped sharing some of my own vulnerabilities might help mitigate that unequal power relationship.

In Ann's case, after I had talked a little about my own father's verbal shaming and control of me, she began talking about her family, particularly her father and her younger sister. "My father is very abusive," she said,
he’s an alcoholic. He’s drunk probably every day and he tells my sister and I how fat we are and stuff. And then he saw I was losing all that weight and he told me I have all these problems and stuff, but nobody took the time to notice my sister. She’s lost probably twenty pounds. She’s as tall as I am [about 5’ 7”]—she was down to ninety pounds, she hadn’t had her period in a long time, and he still calls her fat. And those hair elastics hang loose on her wrists. It’s awful. She’s getting some help now but he’ll still call her fatty and all this.

As we talked about her sister, Ann’s voice lowered almost to a whisper—she was glad to get out of the house and feels she is doing better as a result, but she fears for her mom and sister. Only recently did her mother take Mary, her sister, to the local clinic because she had only had five menstrual periods (at sixteen)—not because of the weight loss, Ann said, but because of her period. Ann couldn’t understand why her mom didn’t seem alarmed by the rapid and severe changes in Mary’s weight, but, she quickly added, "she’s getting help now."

Wanting to support her mother, not criticize her, Ann seemed torn by her protective impulses and her desire to go to college and escape her father. "[I]t’s just helped me a lot to get out of there, but I don’t know," she said.

Sometimes I feel like I’m sinking back into that now and then, but, you know, I can see how, what happened before. . . . I have mixed feelings about [getting out of the house] because I’m afraid to leave my mother and sister alone with my father, but I’m glad cause he was just so obnoxious. For instance, the boyfriend I have now, [my dad] says if he catches him around the house it’s going to cost my mom a hundred dollars each time, cause [my dad] saw him with a hole in his shirt.

As she describes him, Ann’s father tries to control his daughters by manipulating their mother, the one who is supposed to be in charge of them in his absence. He is unpredictable, explosive, and embodies the disciplinary effects of violence and the vulnerabilities of affective, familial attachments on women’s bodies and identities. The needs of the women in this family do not seem to matter, and Ann has probably learned

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that lesson well. So erratic and dominating is Ann's father that he now wants her to get back together with the boyfriend who beat her. She talked of wishing she had a "good father" like some of her friends, a father who "would be around for sports or whatever, just come to see [her play soccer]." "If he ever comes," she said, "you know he'll show up drunk for his friends." On the night her boyfriend attacked her, her father was angry and said, "How could somebody push you down?" When he said that, Ann told me, "I was so mad at him. It was like, take a look at yourself. He's so crummy to my mother about .... I don't know, I guess it makes me appreciate her more, I think, so I try to be a lot nicer to her, I guess, because nobody else is." Upset that her father cannot see himself in her boyfriend's behavior, Ann herself is not able to see herself in her mother. Ann projects her own neediness onto her mother's and there finds a reason to protect her, to care for her as neither seems to do for herself.

**Writing as Emotional Cool: Choosing When to Disclose**

In writing this essay Ann is enacting a kind of care for herself, reassessing her strength, allowing herself some anger about the abuse, constructing herself as healed. She did not want Katerina to respond with pity, she told me because "I'm not sorry it happened, really. I mean, it was a hard time, but I learned a lot from it." She wants to maintain her identity as someone who is now in control of her feelings and "recovered" from whatever trauma she might have suffered. While it can be argued that psychologically she is in denial, it is a denial that allows her to project a self consistent with the culture's emotionology—she is cool, in control, "above passing." Katerina is a safe audience because she is a stranger and she is not connected to anyone Ann knows who might use Ann's
experience against her. This was not the case, however, in high school, where she had an
English teacher who asked students to write about an experience much as Katerina did.
Ann deliberately chose not to "write about something like that" in this teacher's class
because she "felt that teacher was so nosy." He knew her father, she said, and "the class
was so small and [she'd] see him everywhere."

While keeping her family situation and her relationship with her boyfriend private
could be interpreted as a kind of collusion with the abusers, I think Ann was keeping silent
to protect herself, not giving this knowledge to a man she could not trust (this suggests, too,
that Ann may be transferring her relationship with her mother onto Katerina, seeing her
femaleness as safe and empathetic). In high school, her writing would not necessarily
control her "stigmatized" identity as it might in college because her representation of it
could be in dispute—the two male authority figures in her life, her teacher and her father,
wield more power than she to define the "truth" of her experience. At the same time,
whether Anne is aware of this or not, the power of the state could intervene if her teacher
reported her abuse (New Hampshire elementary and secondary teachers are required by
law to report knowledge of physical or sexual abuse). In college, on the other hand, her
writing instructor has no legal obligation to report what she hears from students, and Ann
may have less to fear that Katerina will stigmatize her by pathologizing her.

Interestingly, Katerina made this point as well when she was talking about her own
experiences in high school, particularly with therapy. Like Ann, Katerina encountered an
authority figure whom she did not trust, and she asserts that college may seem a safer place
for students because they perceive everyone as equal adults—her included. Katerina said,
I know what happened to me when therapy was tried on me at 17—I perceived the therapist as my parents' ally, and, you know, when he's telling me that everything that's going on in the house is my fault and blah, blah, blah, and I'm sure that's not what he said, but that's how I perceived it at the time—that was not what I needed. And [for students] to come to college, the first opportunity to have the freedom to pursue yourself as an adult, on equal footing with an adult, I come along at the perfect time. I'm enough of an authority that I can still teach the class, but I'm also acceptable enough that they can let it out to me and feel like it's okay. Usually in therapy or guidance counselor situations, they could report back to your parents, you're still feeling that way. They know I'm not going to call their parents, they know I'm not. I don't even know where they live, for God's sake, how am I gonna [tell their parents]?

For students who want to write about personal and painful experiences, then, a college classroom affords them the anonymity they may need to break their silence in a way they believe they can control, managing their own identities, the feelings of others who might be hurt or can hurt them, and protecting themselves from further victimization.

This is not to say that a college writing course does not have the potential to revictimize these students—I believe that is a very real possibility, particularly if the teacher is insensitive, is uniformed about the sociological, psychological, historical understandings of these issues, and is unaware of his/her own countertransference (responding to the student's experiences as if they were the teacher's own, projecting the teacher's issues onto the student). In addition, students are not on equal footings with their professors, no matter how respectful and decentered their approaches are, and it is quite possible students, especially those who have been abused, may not fully realize this. At the same time, students who have been abused may also have some protective strategies like Ann seems to, and college can be a place where one's words will not hurt parents, where protective agencies are not called upon, or where one might find more empathetic listeners. If they fear being shamed for their "stigmatizing" experiences, maybe that shame seems less likely
in college, or of a less painful nature?

Some of the students I talked with assumed that with college professors they would not be subjected to the kind of scrutiny and judgment they feared from a therapist. When students express their beliefs that counselors will "see right through them," they are certainly voicing a concern about losing control, but they are also conceiving of language as a rather immutable, static, and transparent medium. Words should represent their experience without ambiguity, leaving no space for interpretation or for anyone to use their words against them. I often wonder if that is why many students complain that English teachers analyze texts "to death"—if students think of themselves as writers, and writers' words are subject to such play and metaphorical, psychological interpretation, then how much control do writers actually have over their writing? The writers I have talked to for this study want to control their writing, their subject, their identity, and I suspect this is a particularly strong desire for students who have experienced language as shifting signifiers that are used to deny their own lived/perceived experience. It is important to believe there exists a place where language can mean what the writer intends it to, without dispute.

**Course Context: Writing Is Critical Thinking**

By the time Ann was able to meet with me her essay about being assaulted was several weeks behind her. I was surprised to find that she had not talked with Katerina about this writing—because Ann was the first student I would interview for my study, I was still under the assumption that teachers and students often developed trusting relationships, usually in conference, before a student would write about something so personal. I also found it hard to return an essay like this without talking to the student—which suggests, I
suppose, my sense that written words are more impersonal than spoken ones, or that I had
a different kind of responsibility to a student who was writing about such issues. At the
same time, on the first day we met, I was surprised that Ann was just finishing her first
graded essay of the term, a research paper about the Irish Republican Army (a subject she
had always been interested in, she told me, especially because she had relatives there and
wanted to visit sometime). It was the end of September, over four weeks into a fifteen-
week course, and Ann was already done with the research requirement.

I was surprised that Katerina had moved her students so quickly into research
(many of her colleagues assigned researched essays during the last third of the semester),
but she did so because it oriented students immediately to the ways she wanted them to
think about writing and knowledge—as contextualized, never solely individual, constructed
from multiple sources. Katerina had emphasized that she would be grading these papers
based on how well students managed the balance of "what other people think
[(interviews)], what they think, and what is the be all and end all of the printed word"
(material from the library). Ann had interviewed a reporter from The Boston Globe who
had been covering the cease-fire in Ireland, as well as a student in her dorm who had been
living there, so she talked with me about how her interest in Irish politics had grown as a
result of doing the paper. As I discovered later in the semester, this focus on subjects of
oppression and violence would reappear in her writing, sometimes fueled by an anger that
belied her rather calm and hesitant demeanor.

When Katerina contacted me to say she and Ann were willing to become part of
my research, she told me she was continually surprised that a student would write about
something like physical abuse so early in the semester. Yet Ann was not the only freshman in 401 classes to do so that fall. The other two students (from different sections, different instructors) who wrote about being abused by their boyfriends also wrote about it within the first two weeks of the term, before they had had time or opportunity to get to know their teachers or peers. Contrary to what some of the instructors assumed, these particular students were not sharing personal traumas because they felt comfortable with their teacher or peers, or because they had enough classroom interaction to determine their audience was "safe" or trustworthy. Or at least that is what I assume. Because it is so unpredictable whether and when a student might write about such an experience, I was unable to observe Ann's class before she wrote this piece. By sitting in on her class after she wrote the essay, I had hoped to learn more about the context within which she was writing, about her relationships with Katerina and her classmates, and about her development as a writer given what I later learned was a long history of verbal and occasional physical abuse, low self esteem, and a long term struggle with her weight. One thing is for sure—Ann's experience in Katerina's Freshman English course will do more than surprise those who believe expressivist pedagogies—as opposed to epistemic, postmodern, or critical pedagogies—encourage, evoke, or subtly coerce students to write about these painful experiences.

As I describe the pedagogy of Katerina's Freshman English course, I will focus specifically on 1) how she conceives of "the personal" and its role in writing; 2) how one might categorize her pedagogy based on its epistemological assumptions, its constructions of identity and authority, and the purposes writing is believed to serve (e.g., expressivist,
critical, postmodern, oppositional, etc.); and 3) how as a female teacher she constructs her own authority, her relationships to students, and the authority and agency she encourages students to assume. I pursue these particular questions because, as I have been arguing throughout these chapters, some composition theories focus on essays like Ann's as examples of the dangers of expressivist or personal writing pedagogies, as signs of a romantic, subjective epistemology that eschews sociopolitical critique (and thus as dangerous to the transformational goals of critical pedagogy, for example), as well as unnecessarily threatening to already disempowered students. How many of these critiques characterize Ann's experience in Katerina's class?

I shift the focus here from Ann to Katerina and her pedagogy, and this means Ann may seem to disappear for a while. However, in building this classroom context I prepare to concentrate on one particular class session that Katerina described as a "turning point" for these students, one that illustrates Katerina's interactions with them, her philosophies of writing, and her demands that students critically reflect on both ideas and emotions. This class period is a fascinating example of emotion rules at work, being challenged and negotiated. Then I explore Ann's responses to Katerina's pedagogy by discussing a response Ann wrote after this class session. In it she expresses more anger than in her essay on being abused, but anger that is directed at (and displaced on) a similar kind of oppression (racism) and motivates a critical analysis of the systems that contribute to it as well as of the people (i.e., her classmates) who maintain it by dismissing the legitimacy of anger. In the end I argue that Katerina's course has positioned Ann in a different relation to knowledge, emotion, and writing than that with which she began.
"We had a staff meeting Tuesday," Katerina is telling me, "about what do you do with dumb papers, papers that have no point, the fun-in-the-sun, vacation-in-Florida type papers. I didn't even go to the meeting because I rarely get those, and I think doing [what I do] sets the tone right from the beginning. It sets that high standard up, and they pick those more serious things to write about. But that wouldn't explain why [an essay about physical abuse] would come up in necessarily any class."

We have been talking about why students might write about bodily violence in a writing class, and Katerina seems to be saying that the subject of Ann's essay would not be unusual within the context of her course. But that is not because she focuses on personal narrative, something she emphasizes to me often. She clearly sees herself as quite different from a number of other instructors in the staff, and throughout our conversations that fall she reiterated such distinctions. Although the staff has tried many times to come to some consensus about what common features the courses share, what constitutes an effective essay, and what the purposes of 401 are (particularly in relation to the writing demands in other university courses), the group always seems to resist such attempts to define "the program." Katerina says herself that she gets "as nervous as all the other instructors do about 'Let's define the course.'" She sees the diversity in approaches—and the relative freedom TAs and instructors have—as one of the strengths of the program. However, in defining a pedagogy, no teacher at UNH can avoid engaging with what Goffman might call the program's "social identity": its associations with "personal narrative," expressivism, Donald Murray, conference-based teaching. It doesn't really matter whether this
admittedly nebulous construct of UNH's writing courses is "true"—it has become a type that no one can ignore when talking about what they do and why. In describing what she expects of her students, then, Katerina defines it against her own understanding of this construct, the way "personal narrative" becomes an end in itself, an indulgence in a kind of selfishness and disconnection from community, and a way to avoid thinking about the more difficult and significant issues that affect our culture.

"I do try to get them to use narrative, personal narrative," she said, "to talk about how and why they feel about things, but I tend not to do a lot of personal narrative, and that might be another thing that sets me apart from all those people who might. I don't know, without bringing my personal feelings about personal narrative into it," she laughs, "I think that it tends to be easier for people to do that, and I guess I try to push them to the next level right away, you know, use your personal experiences to talk about something, don't just talk about your personal experience . . . which maybe isn't fair, maybe other people would argue with that, whether or not that works." When she creates a hierarchy here between personal writing and writing that accounts for a reader, Katerina seems to be echoing categories similar to what James Britton might term transactional writing or James Kinneavy might call referential or persuasive writing, discourse that might begin with the personal but that is only a prelude to more "legitimate" aims and modes. But her classroom practice and our further discussions of "the personal" indicate she thinks of the personal as appropriate to bring into the writing classroom when students are ready to think of it as always already situated within culture. The issue is not the personal, but how it can easily reproduce a belief that individuality is about escaping culture and one's responsibility
to community.

As we talked Katerina associated "personal narrative" with both therapy and what she believed was the selfishness of American myths of individuality. She suggested that for her to emphasize the personal in her class was to validate an ideology, a teaching role, and a perspective on writing that contradicted her values. In the extended excerpt that follows, Katerina explains 1) why she sees that personal narrative can so easily evoke a therapeutic relationship (because the significance of the event is primarily important to the writer's sense of self, not to an audience), 2) how she tries to avoid such a dynamic, and 3) why she teaches writing as something that mediates the author's identity within the context of culture and community. She continually refers to her own experiences as sources for her claims, implicitly illustrating the thinking processes she hopes to emphasize in her class. "I don't want to be a therapist," she told me,

and I find that when it's just personal narrative, that's what tends to happen. You're just kind of talking about what that issue is in their life, rather than talking about how that connects to other people and other issues, which I'm much more comfortable talking about. . . .

. . . I think that there's a place for that, there are a lot of other places for that, one. Two, I don't think I'm qualified to do it, and three, I think that the writers I really admire, always always always take it to that next level. Alice Walker never just tells you some personal narrative, or Annie Dillard, any of the people [whom I admire]. And I'm trying to challenge them to aspire to that with their writing, and if I get a personal narrative I say to them very clearly right from the beginning, "Do you want to work on this as an essay, or is this just something you need to write?" I mean I don't defer to them and cut them off, but usually by just asking that question they will say, "Yes, I want to work one this" or "No, I just needed to write this." . . . I don't want to be perceived as somebody who has that responsibility, to figure that out for them. I don't feel comfortable doing that. And I think I got treated that way by people sometimes when I was younger who I don't think knew what they were doing, and I don't like the idea that that ever happened to me. . . .

Michelle: Feeling violated?
Katerina: Well, yeah. I mean, when I was in high school, . . . I had a very bad initiation into the world of therapy for myself and it's not to say that it doesn't work for other people, but I think there's a really fine line in this relationship with students and writing, for writing to fall by the wayside and that therapy thing to start going. And it's just not something that I feel comfortable with. And I don't think it's fair to [students]—I think it sets up a sort of false sense of what is really important in the class, which to me is being able to write and articulate your feelings and your views to other people in such a way that they'd want to hear them and not just talking about something that happened to you. I also was in groups in school where like in a 501 class, where all the papers were just sort of personal narrative, and I always remember feeling really disappointed when I got to the end that that's all it was—why did you tell me this? And that feeling has hung on, in my own workshopping experiences from these classes, and I almost dreaded it because I knew I was going to read another person's story.

While Katerina is certainly equating the personal with the therapeutic here (or with the opportunity for the therapeutic), her classroom practices suggest the issue is more a rhetorical one: personal narratives have been constructed, she might argue, as writings where there is no audience or purpose beyond the self, and effective writing is that which engages an audience beyond the self by situating one's ideas and experiences within a community's shared stories, values, and compelling issues.

And such focus on the self is one of the values she believes she is trying to undo when teaches her writing class:

And I'll be really frank with you, too. The other thing that I have trouble with is, I think that we live in an extremely selfish, self-centered culture. I think that in some ways, you know, completely validating the personal narrative all the time, it's selfishness, you're not being asked to think about how that relates to other people, you're not being asked to think about an audience, you're not being asked to think about how you make this connect to everything, which I think can be as healing. I think the people I know who have benefitted from therapy, my husband among them, did things when there was a group of people and they suddenly have this awareness that there are more people than just me, or suddenly felt that there are other people who need to know this is what happened to me. . . .

. . . [I]t's sad because we miss out on so many opportunities to be able to bond and fix things and feel like we're okay and connect, not to mention the whole realm of stories and creativity and all these other things that are learned and passed
down when you live, where community is valued, that we miss out on. . . . [This individuality is] just endemic in this culture, it's such a huge part of the American identity or the myth of being an American. . . . I mean, if you're about individuality, then why don't you start letting people think about, you know, beyond this sort of mythic idea of it and what that means?

One of the ways Katerina addressed this cultural attitude in Ann's class was asking students to consider how they would define themselves as a generation, especially in terms of historical changes and shared popular culture. She gives them readings from newspapers, magazines, and fiction that try to delineate the characteristics of "Gen X," and these readings often provoke heated debates. But Katerina also asks them to place their generation, however they come to define it, in relation to those of the past several decades.

In this class she had them view a documentary film, Atomic Cafe and read Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried, for example, so they would understand the historical and cultural events that seemed to define the 50's and 60's. Then she visually represents the ways she wants them to view themselves by drawing a series of concentric circles on the board, each representing the larger communities an individual is shaped by: the innermost one labeled "self," the next "inner voice," then "family and friends," "town, community," "state, country," "global," and lastly, "UNIVERSAL—art, music, literature, poetry, emotion, human."

As Katerina describes her philosophies about the personal, individuality, and writing, she argues for their functions in containing excess emotionality. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, this rhetorical philosophy I'll call contextualizing creates a buffer for her between Ann's emotions and those Ann's story evokes in Katerina. They protect them both from the threat Katerina perceives emotional pain can pose to relationships and
psyches. At the same time, contextualizing mitigates the opportunities to pathologize individuals by focusing on systemic influences, making it more likely, Katerina believes, that individual circumstances can change as the result of political critique and action. A sociopolitical rhetoric is arguably more therapeutic here than the rhetoric of psychoanalysis and therapy.

This is not to say Katerina avoids emotional intensity in her class, however. The kinds of emotions she wants to arouse are those she believes will motivate students to challenge the status quo, to reflect critically on what seems "natural" and "normal," to construct the links among the concentric circles she refers to. She does this by occasionally creating conflict or discomfort for her predominantly white, middle class students, particularly through the readings she gives and the questions she poses during discussions (which I will illustrate more specifically in the class session below). In doing so she pushes against these students' desire to avoid emotional intensity (especially conflict) and directs that intensity away from their relationships to each other and toward political ideas and action. As Stearns might suggest, uncomfortable and threatening emotions are re-educated to find another object that doesn't affect other people.

However, the very contextualizing that redirects emotions like anger, resistance, frustration, and passionate commitment to ideas and that buffers Katerina from students' emotional intensity produces an emotional exhaustion for her. Interestingly, she equates teaching with being a soldier:

And my sort of personal, political convictions about [myths of individuality] come up, I think, again and again and again in the way that I teach. For me, that classroom is like a battlefield about life and death to try to get even one person to think about something that they might not have thought of before. Because I don't
see it happening other places in the world, and that's why I get so exhausted
because I feel like I'm fighting this big war.

Because she sees students' resistances to her pedagogy as middle-class denial, it seems
"quite a wall to have to scale":

The fact that I feel that way about it sometimes makes me feel like I'm not the right
person to do this because I put so much weight, I mean, this dominates my life, this
is all I think about, and everything I hear is potentially something I could use in
class. And at one level I think, wow, that must make me a really good teacher, and
at another level I think, that's why I'm going to burn out in a few years. So the
question then becomes, you know, is that kind of the thing that's going to block us
from ever having this equality?

In conceiving of individuals as agents who, through affectively motivated thinking and
action, can change the communities we live in, Katerina negotiates an American
emotionology that uses metaphors of control and dangerous excess to interpret emotion. If
she can't control her frustration, she seems to suggest here, she doesn't need to be teaching.

Our conversation about possibly burning out led her to question the appropriateness
of "bringing" in her ideological commitments. In one of her comments, in fact, she
questions whether to see her political agenda as similar to inappropriate agenda behind
sexual harassment—implying her "subjective" values are a lack of emotional control equal
to the misuse/abuse of power targeted at women's bodies.

Should people even be bringing—I mean am I as bad as Don Silva [(a professor
who was recently accused of sexual harassment)]? Am I bringing some political
agenda into the classroom that's inappropriate, you know, or is there some
boundary between trying to create an environment where people figure that stuff
out for themselves without critical thinking, and kind of implementing something
that isn't appropriate maybe?

She's asking here how dangerous her political agenda is, and in what ways. While it
certainly functions as discipline, like any ideology, it's curious she would link it to
discourses that have disciplined sexuality and gender, particularly the bodies and identities of women.

**Knowing Her Knowledge**

*The epistemic position implies that knowledge is not discovered by reason alone, that cognitive and affective processes are not separate, that intersubjectivity is a condition of all knowledge, and that the contact of minds affects knowledge...*

*...Knowledge is dialectical, the result of a relationship involving the interaction of opposing elements. These elements in turn are the very ones that make up the communication process: interlocutor, audience, reality, language...*

*Communication is at the center of epistemic rhetoric because knowledge is always knowledge for someone standing in relation to others in a linguistically circumscribed situation.* (Berlin 165-166)

Although our conversation began by critically reflecting on the purposes of the personal narrative in a college course, it wound its way to a similar reflection on the appropriateness of acknowledging one's ideological commitments and how they motivate a teacher and inform her pedagogy. Katerina seems to always be enacting the kind of critical thinking she wants to encourage in her students, a kind of thinking that reminds me of Ann Berthoff's reflective, philosopher-teacher, thinking about thinking, "seek[ing] to know [her] knowledge" (vi). Her own education, conversations with the staff (especially a few of the instructors she respects a great deal), and her own reading are constantly in dialogue, prompting her to question her theories and seek ways to bring theory into practice.

Of the many ways to categorize writing pedagogies in the field of composition, it would be difficult to choose the one Katerina might feel most comfortable in. She emphasizes writing as a process, using many of the strategies associated with the early process movement—in-class freewriting, brainstorming, exploratory writing; successive drafting and revising based on both readers' responses and the evolving meanings of the text for the writer; small-group workshops and reading response groups. She emphasizes
an epistemic philosophy, informed by the work of Gary Lindberg, Ann Berthoff, and Paulo Freire, and her ideological commitments, as I've illustrated above, echo some of the priorities of critical pedagogies (like those of Freire and Henry Giroux). At the same time she focuses on issues of craft by studying the work of essayists like Annie Dillard and Alice Walker and asking students to practice developing scenes and details that evoke sensory responses. "I focus everything from the perspective of a writer, and I say, This is what writers do, they take charge of language, they don't let language rule them." While "critical thinking" is the main focus of the course, Katerina also works to develop the student's "voice," a term that has become like the scarlet letter in the field, a moral infraction that indicates one endorses liberal humanist ideology but that shifts meaning for whomever is interpreting it. Katerina wants students to "have a sense of their own voice, and to say things in their own unique way, [and to know that] their own unique perspective on the world is valid." If as Berlin argues "it is this commitment to an epistemology that locates all truth within a personal construct arising from one's unique selfhood that prevents . . . expressionists from becoming genuinely epistemic in their approach" (153), then Katerina's pedagogy may be more expressivist than epistemic.

However, as I've tried to illustrate above, Katerina's philosophies about identity are more complex than the binary oppositions Berlin and others tend to make between locating truth within a stable sense of self outside of culture and locating it in the competing discourses that structure reality and identity, the self being a series of discourses. Goffman's distinctions between social and personal identity seem particularly useful here. Katerina might argue that students adopt dominant social identities that emphasize an
individualism that is self-focused, disconnected from culture, and likely (in her mind) to maintain a status quo that allows particular kinds of oppressions to occur. This kind of social identity in America has been overlaid onto personal identity so that distinctive attributes become signs of this kind of individualism. For example, in a class discussion about rap, students asserted that an artist's lyrics may reflect his own experience—Boogie Down Productions describes two brothers who have three pair of pants between them, for example—but that doesn't mean that experience can be generalized as reflective of a larger culture—in this case, of the poverty that can lead to drug dealing for ghetto blacks. What Katerina hopes to do, I would argue, is to disconnect this association between what she calls students' unique voices and perspectives (personal identity) from this social identity (egocentric individualism) by prompting students to consider who benefits from these identity beliefs. She wants to reconnect personal identity to a social identity where an individual is perceived as part of communities and cultural stories, all of which have the power to challenge dominant ideologies. Even as she resists the social and personal identity beliefs many of her more privileged students bring with them to class, beliefs that give them agency without ethical responsibility, Katerina also tries to work against "student identities" (a particular kind of social identity) that render them passive subjects in an academic environment, as well as in American corporate culture.

"She's more like a knowledgeable friend than a professor." Authority and Agency

During the first class I observed Katerina led a discussion about what it means to claim an education. The students had finished their research papers, turning in what will be their first graded essay, and Katerina asked them what it was like to choose their own
research subject, to develop their own opinion, and to gather both library materials and interviews. Before they begin choosing their own subjects for the rest of the semester (writing a "concept paper" or discovery draft one week and an essay draft the next, sharing their work with their writing partner), Katerina wanted them to reflect on what this research process can teach them about writing. A few of the students expressed concern that they did not have many guidelines to follow as they might have in other courses.

"What does following guidelines do to prepare you as a citizen in a democracy?" she asked. The students stared blankly, remaining quiet.

"Is it learning to think for yourself?" The students still say nothing.

"There is in my opinion—and being a person who teaches writing, is a writer, and worships George Orwell—a lot of danger in only learning to follow guidelines, and there is a lot of value in learning how to set your own guidelines and becoming an independent thinker. And a large part of our course, as we're moving from a research project that challenged you to do this, will be about this aspect of critical thinking that infuses writer's work. Most writers are writing about something they have thought critically about. Part of that is going to be your job in this class." Katerina then wrote on the board a series of opposites that she says represents her view of students, teachers, and education in general:

- claim vs receive
- scholar vs student
- earn vs deserve
- responsibility vs blame

As the class discussed how each of these binaries are different and what each implies about
education, Katerina challenged them to look at the ways the school publications (catalogues, guide books, etc.) use these words, what they imply for their own learning and for other aspects of their lives (like our expectations of government), and thus how these words shape our attitudes toward ourselves and others. She explains that she does not see students as blank slates or empty vessels, but as people with much knowledge to bring to class to combine with her own and other students.

Throughout the conversation she and the students both joke and offer serious comments, and it is obvious to me that many of the students are ready to take her up on challenging guidelines when they point out, for example, that an illustration she used was faulty, or they ask whether class is a "cynical fest." Katerina is not ruffled by comments that resist what she is trying to emphasize. She respects the students' different opinions, listens to them, connects what everyone is saying, asserts her own opinion. Although this particular class remains relatively quiet throughout the semester, very few students seem to feel pressured to believe what Katerina's own politics are—the role she demands they assume in class, that of a scholar who claims an education and takes responsibility for him-or herself, is non-negotiable, but the beliefs, ideas, and values the students choose to pursue are respected and discussed within a context where the speaker/writer will be held accountable to others for what those ideas imply and engender.

The first few weeks of Katerina's course, then, are structured to immerse students immediately in positions of agency and responsibility. I can only imagine what it was like for Ann, who was so silent and seemed not to have models of women's authority, to be in class where a woman like Katerina had such a strong presence and personality, who was
able to encourage multiple perspectives on ideas and respect those who disagreed with her.

In modeling a woman who can both strongly assert her own opinions and not feel diminished or criticized when someone disagrees with her, Katerina offered Ann at least one alternative to a female identity constructed around submissiveness, silence, and self-distrust. At the same time, she encouraged all her students to assert their opinions, to question authority, to have confidence in what they wanted and believed while also questioning those beliefs. Ann's writing certainly reflected more confidence and conviction as the semester progressed. This conviction is particularly evident in a response she wrote to a class discussion about rap music. In arguing that rap musicians deserve to be listened to because they write out of their lived experience, Ann expresses more anger than she did in her first essay and challenges what was said in class in a way she might never have done verbally.

**Who Wants to Listen to All That Hatred?: Ex(ercising Anger**

While Ann's anger about this discussion of rap was only expressed in writing, the other student's "frustrations" or "annoyance" seethed below the surface of the discussion. As I turn to this discussion Katerina's class had about rap music, I will be focusing on the ways anger was constructed, expressed, and managed by both Katerina and the students.

Within the emotionology of American culture, anger has been constructed as one of the more dangerous emotions, particularly in the workplace. Stearns argues that, although adherence to these standards varied, anger in the Victorian period moved from being simultaneously controlled and properly focused to something to "manage and avoid" (120). Interpreted as immaturity, a sign of an unresolved childhood experience, "[s]ignificant
expression of one of the negative emotions—as opposed to mere ventilation—now became the symptom of individual fault, demanding no particular response except (should the onlooker be so inclined) a patronizing tolerance” (135). Efforts to conceal anger, to act as if it did not exist, became particularly extensive in America (239). Although women were instructed in the Victorian period to control their anger, Stearns argues that by the twentieth century, “[n]egative emotions were now too devastating to form part of either masculine or feminine identity” (134). It is certainly debatable whether restraints against anger are equally distributed across gender lines (as some of the students here might illustrate), but Stearns reiterates arguments others have made that the expression of anger has been individualized and pathologized to such an extent that witnesses can dismiss the social and political implications of it. What Stearns adds to these argument is the historical understanding of how this change occurred and how such restraint and avoidance serves capitalist ideologies.³⁷ To study, then, the ways anger is expressed and contained within a writing classroom, in both the texts students write and the discussions they engage, is to study the rhetorical and epistemological roles of emotional intensity and the way power is negotiated in a particular site in the university.

Katerina is leaning against the table at the front of the room, the large chalkboard behind her, the students still in their small groups but turned toward her in their seats. It is after 4:30 in the afternoon on a warm October day. The groups have just finished workshopping two of their classmates’ essays, one about graduation, the other about rap, and Katerina turns their attention to the second. It argues that rap is unfairly criticized and
needs to be understood as part of African-American culture (see "Lisa’s essay," Appendix B).

"What's going on in the second one? Is this a subject that you want to hear about?" Katerina asks.

"It's not talked about a lot," Tara says.

"What part of it is not talked about a lot?" Katerina responds.

"How they're trying to express themselves in their music" Tara says, "a lot of people don't realize that."

From the corner Craig says, "I don't listen to rap personally, but reading [Lisa's essay] was actually educational for me."

Paul, who is sitting in front of me, agrees with Tara, "It's not talked about a lot—it's easy just to say like how bad it is from a distance, but this writer does a good job, I think, of showing how they're saying, what they're actually saying and how they're trying to deal with it and stuff. I think that's why it's not talked about a lot because it's easier, you hear a lot of people say they don't like it, so they don't have to talk about it."

"Right," Katerina says to Paul, "and if you think about the issues that the artists and this writer are talking about, what are the reasons why we don't like to talk about those things?"

"They're negative," Mike says.

"It's happening, one," Katerina says, restating what someone else has said as Mike spoke. "It's negative, two. We don't want to deal with it, three. We might have to change something about—"
Katie interrupts: "I see it as just the opposite, though."

"Okay, go ahead."

"I think it is talked about and I think oftentimes it's talked about too much. I feel--"  

"Where?" Katerina says quickly.

"If you just like listen to people, it's like . . . I was annoyed," Katie says, searching for words. "I . . . I was just annoyed by it because I mean, I think it's talked about enough to the point like where you get sick of hearing it. I don't know, I'm just tired of it."

"Okay. What do the rest of you think?"

Erik speaks without raising his hand. "I like how she used a lot of different lyrics and examples from different kinds of rap music to kind of back up her points." He sidesteps her question, avoiding the explosiveness of Katie's comments and maintaining the "good" emotional feel of the class. But I suspect he is also responding to Katie's classroom identity: according to most of her classmates, Katie shuts many of them down, making generalizations that are not open to dispute. When she speaks, some of them roll their eyes, others shut themselves down. Katerina works hard in this discussion to challenge Katie's comments, and eventually other students begin challenging her as well.

"What do you think about what Katie said?" Katerina asks Erik.

"I don't think it's talked about that much."

"I don't understand where it's--" Tara begins, turning to Katie, "Where is it talked about?"

"Well, you hear people say how Ice T was in the killing fields—I don't think he knows what the killing fields were. That was in Vietnam. I think that people use things to..."
like personify things that just, I don't know."

"I'd just be really curious to know where this gets talked about," Katerina continues.

"That's what I was going to say," Josh says. He too usually speaks his unpopular opinions during discussions. "If you ever—I mean I'm not saying I necessarily agree with you—but if you ever watch MTV, every other news segment is like 'violence, stop the violence,' and they always have a big segment on it. I mean, if you look for it, it does get talked about quite a bit. I'm not saying it gets talked about too much, but I don't really think that there's a lack of information about it, this type of thing."

"If you listen to like the news and stuff like that," Katie says, "and how rappers have been arrested for violent crimes..."

"Okay—" Katerina says.

Katie interrupts: "...and also other people have been arrested for violent crimes other than just rappers, I'm not necessarily stereotyping rappers."

"Okay, so the subject of rap music gets talked about a lot maybe in the media," Katerina says, "because I know when 2 Live Crew happened it was big news, like censorship and all these other issues got talked about. But I think part of what Lisa's paper was attempting to do was to say, Look at what they're talking about, and those are the things that we don't want to talk about. Like at a higher level above this we can say, Oh, rap music, whatever, gets talked about—I know MTV has MTV Yo Raps and all these cheesy programs, but I guess what I'm thinking about when you say that," she looks at Lisa, "what I hear you saying is, we don't talk enough about what the issues are that the rap music is about—if you're saying that we do," referring to Katie, "I'm not sure that I agree
with, I don't think the issues that they're putting forth get talked about enough. That's my opinion."

Admirably undaunted, Katie responds, "How can you say that, like, that 'You should have killed me last year,' how can you say that's an issue? I just—"

"That's written for the issue," Lisa, the writer says. "He's saying, 'Fuck the police, fuck—' Everything he says is against society. Obviously he has a problem with it."

"And the problem should be addressed." Tara adds.

"Like slavery," Paul begins, "I mean way back way back when, like basically they're brought up in that kind of environment. It kind of trails on into the future."

"I think what you're raising is important for the fact that obviously we're going to disagree about it," Katerina says, "and it explains a lot about what goes on in our culture. My opinion is we don't talk about racism nearly enough, and we don't listen to other people's points of view about racism, which is part of what I think rap music represents."

"I think talking about it only goes so far," Katie disagrees. "I think you need to do something instead." I am struck by how steadfastly Katie asserts her disagreements with Katerina, even interrupting her.

"Well, that's what rappers are doing, they're saying, Look this is where I live, this is what happens to me, this is what my experience is about," Katerina responds. As they talk, several hands go up and students who are usually silent make comments. The discussion turns to how reliable rap lyrics can be if the rappers no longer live in the city. If an artist has "made it" in bourgeois terms, then his credibility is in question, as well as the credibility of his message. So, the most vocal students in class have challenged Lisa's argument by
asserting 1) they hear about it too much (automatically lessening the importance of the messages) and 2) they can't trust rappers are telling the truth. Then Becky returns to Katie's last point that "you can talk about it all you want, but it's what you do about it."

"Okay, so my next question then," Katerina says, "if talking about it isn't enough, is getting your message out, though, and writing something about it, be it a song lyric or an essay, doing something?"

As students respond to this question, they shift the argument to questions of pathos, how appropriate and effective it is to express anger and frustration, to describe poverty, ghetto life, drugs, and gangs. Becky says, "I think it's important to make the public more aware of their problems, but I think that—I don't really listen to rap music—but I think that it could be done in a more positive way, you know, maybe they could say things in a better way—they're catching your attention, I think that's mainly what they do, but, you know, repeating 'Fuck the police' and blah, blah, blah. They could say something much better. I don't want to listen to music that's like that." For a text to be effective, it needs to maintain the standards of emotionology and only generate "good" emotions in a reader. A writer's intense (and therefore dangerous) emotions need to be private and well-controlled, not unleashed to stir up negative emotions in the reader. In this case, though, as Katerina later points out, this rhetoric of control is particularly important for whites to assert about minorities. In demanding minorities adhere to these emotion standards, whites can sever the values represented in rapper's anger and hatred from those emotions: rage is no longer about poverty and racism, it's about immaturity, loss of control, and offensiveness.

Craig comments that rappers use the language they do "for effect, they do it to tick
people off, to get the publicity more than to get their message across." Evoking negative emotions, again, is manipulative, self-serving, exploitative. To violate emotion rules in order to make a buck is even more reason why listeners do not need to attend seriously to a rapper's expression. The issue is no longer about being oversaturated with how oppressed African-Americans are or about how "real" their experiences are—it's about emotional control and manipulation. The listener's discomfort instead of the speaker's lived experience. But Katerina wants to show them how racially motivated these arguments are:

"Okay," Katerina says. "You know who I think of instantly after what you just explained? Can you guess who I think of? Kurt Cobain. I have this message, it is very important for me to say something and make a statement with my music, which is 'Fuck society' basically, if you listen to his music—fuck materialism, fuck America, I'm sick of it, right? That's Cobain's, Nirvana's message, right? Sort of, basically, yes, no?" She uses a musician these students can "relate" to whose work is similar to that of rappers. If the messages are the same, she seems to imply, then why do people laud Cobain and not rappers? She continues, "Couldn't do it. You can't do it. It's too overwhelming, and the expectation on him and his group was to sell out. If you want to make money and be famous in America, you have to sell out. And he walked this really fine line . . . . It is incredibly hard in this culture to make a statement for something and stand up for something. And so all these attempts that get made by people need to be looked at, things that go against the status quo need to be looked at and not necessarily be just written off as a way to make money or whatever. Now that's not to say that there aren't people who don't cash in on that in any movement. But I instantly think of him and how hard it must
have been to try to do the things he believed in in the face of the system, the market, right? Does that make sense?" Instead of seeing intense, negative emotions as purely sensational and exploitative, Katerina proposes that an artist like Cobain (whom she assumes these students like) discovered that the values attached to those emotions would be coopted by commercialism. When the ideas an emotion represents challenge dominant values, they are made safer by being sensationalized.

Katie disagrees with Katerina that Cobain believed in the values his lyrics expressed, but Katerina reemphasizes her point that music artists struggle to get their messages out without "selling out." Then she calls the students' attention to how "nervous [we get] about the subject of racism" and start falling into stereotypes. Katie asserts that Lisa's essay created these stereotypes, but Katerina quickly returns to the question of expressing anger and what it demands of listeners/readers.

"But are we pretty open to listening to other ways people tell things," Katerina asks, "or do we need people to be that angry before we listen?" Some of the students work hard to maintain that anger is not necessary, that it's too offensive to be productive and they should not have to be subjected to it. No one acknowledges his/her own angry responses during this discussion, or the way Katie dismissed Lisa's essay as "annoying"(a negative emotion, arguably, that she expects the class to take seriously as an indication of the essay's effectiveness. How useful is an "annoying" essay?) As privileged white students, many I assume from middle class backgrounds, they have no need to understand black experience and anger, and I am not surprised by this turn in the conversation. I wonder what the silent students are thinking, how well the thirteen who are talking reflect the diversity of opinion
in the class as a whole.

Andrew says, "Well, Bob Marley did a pretty good job."

"Bob Marley did a pretty good job, no doubt about it," Katerina responds. "But most of the people that listen to Bob Marley were ready to hear it. It's not the same kind of assault tactic—it's a different approach."

"I like Bob Marley's approach better," Alison says, who has been quiet up to this point. "I don't know, like (inaudible) is a lot better than 'fuck this, fuck that.'"

"It's easier to listen to," Tara agrees.

"And he's representing an African culture more in the sense of how they were," Andrew continues.

"Well, he's also not American—it makes a big difference," Katerina says. "He's from Jamaica. It's a completely different culture from being in America."

"Yeah, that's true...", Andrew says.

"It's a lot easier to listen to," Tara repeats. "It's not as angry, and I think that's a lot easier to—"

"What's wrong with anger?" Katerina persists.

"Well, some of his songs are angry but he just doesn't yell about it," Andrew comments. "He sings about them sad."

"Anger is magnetizing," Paul says. "It makes you angry listening to it. A prime example, you go to a comedy show to laugh, I mean you don't go to a comedy show to be angry, so you listen to something." Plato would be proud.

Katerina comments that she finds the messages in rap music, expressed in anger.
more "honest" than some of the pop 80s tunes that were becoming popular again.

"I think that anger is good in a sense because when you're angry enough you'll actually do something, so it promotes action," Becky says, "but I think that in so many rap songs that I have heard, I think they overkill it, you know, because, who wants to listen to all that hatred in this society?"

When the period ends Katerina encourages the students to write a concept paper on this issue, and she compliments them on the liveliness of the discussion. She is quite pleased with how many people spoke, how many people seemed to open up when they saw Katie unable to specifically defend her "generalizations." This class, she tells me, will lead well into her plans for next week when she will introduce her visual of concentric circles. At this point, she says, the students can only see rap as an isolated and offensive phenomenon, not as a product of other social forces whose meanings depend on context. In the next few weeks she will augment this metaphor with the introduction to Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon's anthology *Signs of Life in the USA*, a piece that describes semiotic thinking, and they will have read a number of texts about the historical events that shaped each generation, from the 1950s to the present.

Ann did not speak during this class discussion, and the response essay she wrote later describes how furious she became as more students argued why the messages and situatedness of rap music could be ignored. As I have tried to emphasize, the subtext of this discussion was emotional control—who has to "change" their negative emotions and why. The students who spoke clearly wanted to read essays with "positive messages"—they even criticized the graduation essay for not being positive enough. As readers they did not
They want to avoid stirring up their own negative feelings; socialized to be preoccupied with containing their own unruly emotions, they don't want someone else's to interfere. So, assuming their feelings are natural responses, and it's natural not to have negative ones, they can dismiss the political messages in rap music without being accused of being racist. Rap is about individuals who are a little off the mark, not able to stay in control, and many of the students in this class discussion effectively argued to silence these artists on the basis of violating emotion rules.

Much more is going on in this conversation than this negotiation of emotional expression, of course, but I want to highlight how this "discourse on emotion" works to sustain particular relations of power—here based on race, gender, and class. For a student like Ann who has been silenced in so many ways, this conversation could have reinforced her shame, self-recrimination, and silence. But I think the combination of Ann's own anger, Lisa's essay, and Katerina's responses during this discussion all provided sites of resistance. In her response to the class Ann wrote, "I was just so glad when I read Lisa's essay to see that other people (White people) see how critical these issues are in today's society." She aligns herself with Lisa against the majority of people who spoke in class, and I suspect Katerina's support of Lisa's paper reinforced her resolve. What Katerina did during this conversation was to challenge the students' a priori assumptions that negative emotions were signs of ineffective art—she argued that anger had a place in written expression and tried to confront the racial prejudices obscured by their "feeling rules." In doing so she tried to redefine anger not as individual pathology or immaturity but as a justified response to social oppressions.
Within the larger context of Ann's classmates, Ann's response to Lisa's essay and the class discussion is not unusual in the way an intense emotion is an equal part of the process of knowledge building and writing in Katerina's course. Many of the students responded with indignation and frustration in their responses to a Kent State documentary, Tim O'Brien's novel, and the readings on Gen X. What I do think is significant about Ann's response is that, as a young woman whose sense of identity and being in the world has been shaped by violence, verbal abuse, and severe bodily discipline, she was being offered a rhetorical model that does not ask her to suppress her anger (or see it as contaminating reason) or continue to be submissive and subjected.

"Making Everyone Breathe a Little More Shallowly": Ann's Response

Although our emotions are epistemologically indispensable, they are not epistemologically indisputable. Like all our faculties, they may be misleading, and their data, like all data, are always subject to reinterpretation and revision. Because emotions are not presocial, physiological responses to unequivocal situations, they are open to challenge on various grounds. They may be dishonest or self-deceptive, they may incorporate inaccurate or partial perceptions, or they may be constituted by oppressive values. Accepting the indispensability of appropriate emotions to knowledge means no more (and no less) than that discordant emotions should be attended to seriously and respectfully rather than condemned, ignored, discounted, or suppressed.

Alison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge"

"The class totally disillusioned me," Ann told me. "I didn't expect that at all." She had just given me her response paper and began talking about it before I'd had a chance to read it. "I talked to a couple of people outside the class and they were like, 'What are you talking about?' and they said that they agreed with the girl in the class that was saying 'Oh, we hear way too much about this stuff.' I don't know. So I just, well, I talked to Katerina about it in the meeting and she said she couldn't believe it either, so she just doesn't mention it cause it sets her off so much." It made sense to me that a quiet student like Ann
would take the opportunity of an informal response assignment to express her anger and arguments (see Appendix B). Although she would not be sharing this with anyone except Katerina, Ann works in this piece to establish her credibility by asserting how much she used to believe what some people in class do about rap:

I guess you could go so far as to say that I used to be one of those people Lisa discusses in her paper that thought that all rap was about the degradation of women and that it placed little value on human life until my best friend made me listen to her "mixes" and I realized that not all of the music really was that bad.

Interestingly, what prompted her to reassess what many believe condones violence against women were women rappers like Queen Latifa who "sings to women, telling them to demand the respect they deserve. 'You ain't a bitch or a ho,' she explains. I think it was this song that told me to wake up, that there was more to rap than disrespectful sex and violence, there are serious social issues addressed in rap music." As someone who has fought for her own self-respect, Ann is willing to listen to someone else whose message counters the misogynist ones women hear daily. At the same time, she appreciates another woman who is willing to call attention to the voices of people who are suffering.

Two things are significant about this response as it compares to her first piece about being assaulted: First, although she does have a paragraph where she makes more conventional assertions about the cultural changes that could be made to better the lives of African-Americans, very little of this response explicitly accommodates to whomever she conceives her audience to be. Unlike her first essays, it is directly addressed to her classmates. Her opening paragraphs make moves to understand where her classmates might coming from, but much of the essay focuses on her emotional response as it argues against students like Katie. In this sense it is more assertive, the narrator less concerned
about taking care of her reader's feelings and avoiding conflict:

[When it came time for the class to discuss the essay I was absolutely stunned when that girl, the same one who complains about everything, said that she thought that the essay was "annoying." First of all, what kind of a person has the nerve to say that she thinks her classmate's paper is annoying and secondly, how can anyone say that they're sick of hearing about this subject constantly? Maybe I live a sheltered life or something but I really can't identify with her complaint. I really don't think that we hear enough about this stuff. I think that society has got a major problem on its hands about the quality of life for minorities that must be addressed and isn't.

When people began to back up the "annoying" girl (I forget her name, I'll call her Sue) by saying that information on this topic is everywhere—MTV, etc., I was amazed. I suppose it is basically true that I never watch TV, but I find it really hard to believe that these issues are addressed everywhere.]

Because Katerina was the only one who read this piece, Ann is still not directly confronting the people with whom she disagrees and feels such anger for. But the anger is palpable here in a way it isn't in her earlier essay, and it becomes intertwined with her argument.

Secondly, this response is significant because Ann questions her classmates' efforts to keep anger linked to deviance and severed from conditions of oppression. By analogy, she is arguing to have her own anger (at her father, her boyfriend) mean something beyond immaturity, selfishness, irrationality. And, like Katerina, she questions a listener's right to be deaf to victims of poverty, racism, and societal abuse. She writes,

I was overcome by pure frustration. I knew I should have said something in class and wanted to but I was past frustration. I was mad. I'm not sure why I got so angry, but I even had the little tremors and hot cheeks of true anger. People in the class, not all but a lot, were the same "Chris" that Lisa wrote about who generalized all rap as just being about killing and sex. This is true of the typical gangster rap, but this conveys a message to the listener that this is an issue that must be changed. Sure I understand when many people said that they didn't want to listen to this kind of music because it is so negative, but for goodness' sake, at least hear and be aware of what is going on! I want people to hear the words and to say that no one should have to live like that, that something must be done. I don't want them to tune themselves out and say that we hear too much about this problem. Obviously we don't hear about it enough when conditions in the ghetto
persist, even worsen as they do.

Ann is also talking indirectly about the conditions of her own life here, but the issue of racial oppression may be less threatening for her to address. At issue are the reasons for listening. Later in the piece she asserts, "the more we don't listen to these messages either because they 'don't apply to us' or we just plain don't like to hear it, the more we contribute to the problems." Here she directly implicates her readers (her classmates) in racism in a way she cannot implicate her father or her boyfriend in sexism—she is beginning to elaborate on the societal forces—supported by individuals—that produce the possibility for ghetto life in a way she has not yet done so for her own experience. She is beginning, that is, to distinguish anger that is about power (and violence) from anger that is about trauma and oppression.

"I Just Seem to See Everything in a Different Way Now"

I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why story-truth is truer than happening-truth.

Tim O'Brien, The Things They Carried

What I have just described—a change in Ann's sense of confidence and authority as a writer, her challenges to emotion rules—she herself described with an example of how she would now think about a Vietnam Vet differently as a result of Katerina's course. The semester affected "the way I think about things," she told me—Katerina's emphasis on individuality within the context of community, on the practice of semiotics as a mode of critical thinking, on dialectical relationship among rhetoric, emotion, ideology, and lived experience:

I look at [things] broader, and try to, well, in a more analytical way to see things differently. Like after we read that book [The Things They Carried], I saw a guy
in a movie store and his hat said, "I'm a Vietnam Vet." Before I read that book I would have said, you know, "Well, what do you want, a medal or something?" And after I read that, you know, I'm wondering, does he need to talk about this? And I'm planning on interviewing him. I want to see what he has to say about it. So I'll never think about a Vietnam Vet the same ever again.

Cause I used to think the war movies, it was their way of getting off, "Oh, yeah, I killed people," but now it's not, I really don't think that way at all anymore. . . . I thought they were all for glorifying the soldier, but I think maybe it's their way of having someone else understand what they've been through.

Instead of feeling resentment that a Vietnam Vet announces his relationship to trauma, instead of pathologizing him as dominant culture has, Ann now wants to listen to him. O'Brien's book affected the way she thought about emotion and bodily violence--it influenced what Kali' Tal describes as her "personal myths" (Goffman's concept of personal identity) in such a way that it changed her intellectual and affective relationship to victims of violence. As a testimony to the unreality of war, to its fragmenting of coherence and order, his novel dramatized the urgency of witnessing to trauma as an attempt to enter that old order again, to reconcile the truth of trauma, itself unspeakable, with what O'Brien's character believed about himself, about life, about war. "Re-telling the war in a memoir or describing it in a novel," Tal says, "does not merely involve the development of alternative national myths through the manipulation of plot and literary technique, but the necessary rebuilding of shattered personal myths" (117). Speaking and writing about traumatic violence can be a way of reassembling an identity that allows one to be seen and heard by those who have not suffered, who represent the original state of innocence that preceded the violence. While Ann may not yet see the connections between her experience and that of the vet's (or that there are significant differences)®, she has been introduced to writing and speaking about the unspeakable as healing, especially within relationships.
In writing to more fully understand his experience, O'Brien also demonstrated what Katerina meant by semiotic thinking, and thus her belief that a sociopolitical rhetoric can be healing and socially transformative. He critiqued war and violence by placing the meanings of soldiers' language, of the things they carried, their actions, all within the context of war, culture, and identity—but as Ann pointed out, he did so by combining critical thinking and emotions. This further reinforced a re-education of emotions Ann was immersed in through Katerina's course where the feelings someone expressed—anger, resistance, fear—were interpreted as connected to the person's values and lived experience and part of developing a "critical social theory."

This is not to say, of course, that Katerina treated all emotional expressions equally. She was uncomfortable with those expressed in a personal essay where the writer focused on only him/herself and ignored the reader's need for mutual significance. She tried to avoid, that is, essay subjects that reinforced dominant emotionology. And that's exactly my point. For Ann, this approach provided a context and opportunity for her to consider—through the experiences of others—her own experiences of being physically and verbally abused as part of a larger system of power. An opportunity. At the same time, Katerina's pedagogy invited Ann to consider her anger as legitimate and critical to her resistance. In Ann's own words,

"It's made me want to think more about exactly what is right, and how we should feel about something. And how it's important to talk about things. I think a lot of time in our society people do feel shut down and they don't want to say anything. And I think it's important to say things."
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Several years ago when I began my preliminary research on women writing about sexual abuse, I tried to locate three of my former students from the course Writing About Female Experience, hoping to get permission to study their work. It had been over a year since the course ended, and the university had no address for one young woman (who had been raped by a step-family member), but directed me to both Stephanie and Emily (from Chapter 3). Stephanie was just finishing her senior year and hoping to study in the Soviet Union soon. Emily, however, had moved back to her home city in the southern part of the state and transferred to a local college, working part time to support herself. I was surprised and pleased that she was still in school—she had been so silent in class, seemed so disengaged, that I wasn't sure she really wanted to be there. I had thought it significant that, after writing about being abused by her step uncle, she raised her head off her desk during class and began participating in discussions, but I wasn't sure how that might transfer to her college experience in general.

When I talked with Emily, though, she told me that writing her essay was the beginning of a process that prompted her to transfer and then start attending group therapy for sexual abuse survivors. In the letter she wrote me later, she included a short piece she had written, possibly for publication, that narrates her experience of being selected for jury duty to try a man who had allegedly raped a ten-year old girl. In this piece a lawyer asks
her if she has ever had a crime committed against her, and she considers what he could mean by "crime." Being slapped by a friend when they were children? Being french-kissed as a child by her teenage step uncle? Having a rock break her window? Having her step uncle force her to perform fellatio? Her money missing from her purse? A crime? she keeps asking. "No," she finally answers. The fact that she uses this irony to dramatize her point suggests her own double consciousness, in a sense, and captures with skillful understatement the powerlessness women can reexperience in the courtroom when sexual violation is not considered a crime. Her anger is palpable, her narrative voice more assured than in the writings for my course. I am reminded of Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers"—Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters recognize their shared experiences are valid knowledge for understanding why Minnie Wright killed her husband, knowledge of being lonely and patronized, their experiences considered trifles. I was surprised at the differences between the narrator Emily created in the first essay I saw and in this one. And if I had not contacted her after my course, I most likely would not have been privileged to see these differences.

Throughout this study I have tried to keep Emily in mind and the point she emphasizes for me that we can't know what happens to our students after they leave our classes. We can't know when they turn in a piece about being abused or having an eating disorder where that writing and thinking might take them. Nor can we know if they have written about it before. Some of my colleagues who have been responding to drafts of this project have expressed relief that they may not have as much deleterious effects on these students as they fear—they may not be the only ones students write to about these issues.
nor have as much agency as they believed. Based on what students told me, I found little evidence that they were being re-traumatized by teachers or the writing process, but that's in part because I'm not trained to research and perceive what psychotherapists and analysts might consider a reininfliction of trauma or dangerous flood of recovered memories. It may also be that students who have had negative experiences writing about bodily violence were not willing or available to talk with me. Much more research can be done on just this question. Within the limits of my project, however, I learned that teachers are likely to fear that students are asking them, through their writing, to be therapists, but that the scrutiny of therapy, in students' view, is the very thing they hope to be protected from when they write in the university.

I certainly took a risk in 1990 when I taught Emily's course, a risk that the power imbalance between me and my students might allow me to unwittingly revictimize them, render them more vulnerable to state disciplinary power in the act of "confessing" their experiences. While I did not conceive of my role that way then, I am not comfortable casting myself as an authority figure whose power can only be used negatively to victimize. Of course that's possible, and as a feminist I feel strongly that we need to be vigilant about those possibilities. But even Foucault argues that power is also productive in positive ways. Compassion, humility, and a respect for students are not necessarily guises for oppressive power—to argue so casts all human behavior in dichotomously pessimistic, oppressive, and exploitative terms, a view of ideology that Foucault might argue is still situated in juridico-discursive models (romantic models where the individual can still throw off the power of the state). Wouldn't it be more productive to turn the field's preoccupation with its own
"self-analysis," its own subjectivity, to the cultural systems that produced this violence for these students in the first place?

What I have been trying to build in this study is an argument for listening. For attending to the words and voices of students as they make and unmake themselves, write and rewrite culture, consider and reconsider language, power, truth. Essays on bodily violence do not appear in writing classrooms only because Rikki Lake, *The National Enquirer*, and group therapy have made such experiences sensational, good voyeuristic fodder, or signs of pathology. To associate all writing about bodily violence (in the case of this study) with pop psychology and a "cult of the victim," as Kathleen Pfeiffer might do, is like arguing that any expression of feminist ideas means one is a "radical, man-hating, lesbian" feminist—as many of our students do. As I have illustrated, bodily violence has been written and talked about throughout Western history, in distinctly different ways and for distinctly different purposes, even though it has also been suppressed, obscured, and used to victimize and exploit. And, when our students write about their experiences they do so from a number of different discourses that are not limited to pop psychology or talk show discourses. One of the most important things I've learned from reading these students' essays and talking with them is that a writing teacher needs to begin by first being skeptical of his/her own impulses to read these texts only through psychotherapeutic/analytic discourses—and thus to understand their role as examining the body and psyche of students in the process of examining their texts.

This also means attending to the polyphony of discourses students use to represent their experiences, possibly building on the critical strategies they already exercise there.
The subjects of abuse and eating disorders have been politicized in both popular and academic contexts, so when a student engages one of these discourses, she is bringing with them the possibility of critical reflection and sociopolitical analysis. The essays in this study also raise questions about the argument that personal and painful subjects can only be written about in egocentric and self-absorbed ways, or that these writers are too emotionally unstable to write academically at all. In fact, many of the students I worked with came from honors Freshman English courses and/or did quite well academically. Frequently they work from their outlaw emotions to question who has named the "truths" of their experiences and told them why and how they should feel, developing what Jaggar calls "a critical social theory" in the process. Their emotions disrupt their texts at times, demonstrating as Abigail Abbott Bailey did that emotions—and writing—can allow the strength and critical reflection necessary for resistance. In joining emotion and reason dialectically, the personal and the academic, the private and public (even in the simple act of writing about bodily violence in a university), these students challenge power relations and, in some cases, the emotion rules that organize American culture. In fact, critical pedagogies like Katerina's can be part of the process of encouraging all students to use and understand knowledge and language as sustained by these dialectical relationships, recovering a place in rhetoric and epistemology for emotion as biological, cultural, and critically reflective. To see these students only as ego-centric, psychologically unstable, or re-enacting America's obsession with victims, is to elide the rhetorical, social, and sometimes critical strategies they employ in an effort to be visible, "normal," and heard.

I was most surprised to learn how many students seemed to desire the normalizing
functions of college writing. Particularly for those who write anonymously, early in the semester, college seems to be a safer place to write about experiences that have decentered their sense of identity and reality. Stigmatized as women and as victims of abuse or self-inflicted starvation, these students attempt to manage those stigmatized identities within a public institution known historically for its emphasis on objective, reasoned discourse, unified authorial identities, and the relatively inconsequential writing within a first-year composition course. Freshman English may seem like a good place to try to "pass" or to be above passing—to be "healthy," in control, intelligent, not affected by the rhythms and chaos of bodies that seem to have betrayed them. In assuming these identities, they can still be adhering to standards for "emotional cool" in American culture, yet also be safely expressing intense emotions because professors and classmates are strangers who will not be hurt or disillusioned to the same degree friends and family may be. The "phantom acceptance" proffered by the university community may be easier to manage than that of their intimates.

The phrase "managing" identities also suggests the dialogical relationship between the student's desired identity and her audience's projection or construction of it, Foucault's sense of being both an active Subject and yet a passive one. It's especially important, I think, for women who have suffered bodily violence to believe a unified, "normal" self is possible through writing in an academic context. They have a place to practice the centered/controlled sense of identity that projects (and commands) authority—or at least has for men. The discourses they can appropriate to represent and understand their experiences are ones that might make the experiences visible to an audience they want to
reach (whether its members are fellow sufferers or not), garnering attention through rhetorical argument, lyrical essays, or academic research. However, because these experiences are constructed by culture as painful and emotional, even threatening to relationships and the work of the academy, these students challenge the dichotomies that produce the very possibility of having a centered, controlled, cool identity when they write about bodily violence in a public, rational space and discourse. Their subjects confront readers, as Goffman would say, with their own "spoiled identities" and thus with the arbitrariness of the distinctions between normal and deviant, healthy and diseased, mature and immature. In so doing, these subjects challenge the unequal power relationship between teacher and student that is partly maintained by fearing "sentimentality" (now, I wonder, represented as a fear of psychotherapy).

Within composition studies, some readers have responded quite strongly to what is understood as a violation of "feeling rules" these essays represent. These discourses on emotions illustrate an anxiety about the unruly bodies and emotions of (mostly female) students once constructed as amenable to the discipline of mechanical correctness. Often, however, arguments about such personal writing now try to regulate students' texts/bodies by linking the personal with the emotional, the emotional with middle class ideology, and that ideology with oppressive systems of power teachers need to instruct students to resist. The opportunity for these oppressions are partly rooted in beliefs that universal, coherent identities and values are possible and desirable—thus students need to have their identities decentered. A good place to start seems the contemporary manifestations of Puritan self-analysis. I have been arguing that these theories often assume emotion as presocial,
psychobiological, and "weak" (in that they make students more vulnerable and in need of
protection), but the student texts in this study also suggest what many feminists have
asserted about postmodern theory—the identities that can be "safely" decentered are those
of white, heterosexual, middle class males. They don't have as much to lose in being
fragmented, textualized, un-authorized, their bodies written on.

While I'm obviously skeptical about the pedagogical projects that seem, as Lynn
Worsham suggests, like a kind of "wilding," I think it important for students who write
about bodily violence in a college composition course to be offered multiple perspectives
on their experiences, to see them as socially constituted, not isolated and therefore deviant.
Academic theories have quite different interpretations of the meanings of sexual/physical
abuse and eating disorders—multiple mirrors, in a sense, to see oneself refracted through—but so too do fiction, essays, poetry, drama, and film. Two new collections have just been
published that gather women's writings from various historical periods and genres—
Nature's Ban: Women's Incest Literature, and Eight Lessons in Love: A Domestic
Violence Reader—and other texts have been published representing contemporary writing.
Abigail Abbott Bailey's memoir is a powerful reminder that sexual and physical violence in
not just a recent phenomenon, nor is it restricted to families of low economic status.

Future research could pursue what happens when a student like Jodi's (with whom I
opened this dissertation) reads other women's writing about incest. How might it affect her
own writing, her experience in the class, her relationship with her teacher and classmates,
her sense of identity? In addition, since we often don't know where a student takes her
writing after she leaves our class, students who have written about their bodily violence in Freshman English might be followed through their other courses for a few years. A couple of students came to talk with me who had not only written about their eating disorders their freshman year, they had written about them in high school and then later in other courses—one student was writing her honors thesis based on a proposal she made in an earlier essay to study what positive, hopeful meanings anorexic women may have made from their experiences. Graduating with a major in biology and a minor in nutrition, this young woman plans to become a physician’s assistant. Is she an exception?

In order to explore more closely the role “expressivist” pedagogies may play in why students choose to write on these subject, researchers might do a broader study that gathers materials from diverse programs—say, from Syracuse University, Ohio State University, U-Mass-Amhurst. It might also study courses beyond strict “writing” classes to pursue the role course content might play—literature and women’s studies, history and sociology, for example. In addition, because my own study did not account for class, race, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation, these might be significant to who, how, and why students would disclose. Access to therapy is often affected by these factors, and an individual’s literacy practices—whether her family of origin condoned self-help reading, for example, or encouraged speaking about one’s family to strangers—may also influence how and why students will or will not write on these issues.

Lastly, research might be done on the dynamics of transference and counter-transference in student-teacher relationships vis-a-vis writing about bodily violence. Although I have not emphasized them in this project, psychological theories (as well as
theories of trauma) have much to add to our understandings of why students might disclose, what role gender may play, and how teachers might respond. From a theoretical perspective, French feminist theory and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory would offer a fuller discussion of the relationships among the body, writing, sexuality, abuse, and gender. These student essays are rich, and they continue to pose questions to me about what I assume about students, teaching, and writing, as well as what it means that their writings and the responses of teachers are continually adding to what Vikki Bell calls "archives of pain."
NOTES

1. See, for example, Kali Tal, Cathy Caruth, Karen Remmler, Elaine Scarry.

2. See Alison Jaggar, Catherine Lutz, and Rom Harre'.


4. For an elaboration on this critique of Foucault, see Vikki Bell (32), Lois McNay, and Jana Sawicki (Chapter 5).

5. See Sandra Harding, Patti Lather, Gesa Kirsch and Patricia Sullivan.

6. I did not specifically define what I meant by sexual and physical abuse or eating disorders, wanting to know how each teacher and student might define these terms themselves.

7. Because I felt these students were already sharing so many private things with me, I did not ask them questions about their class background, their ethnicity, or their sexual orientation. That was a decision made for both professional and personal reasons (my own discomfort with asking them to share more). The research literature about sexual abuse, physical abuse, and eating disorders do address how differences in class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation affect victims' experiences, so these issues may warrant further study.

8. Of the three male instructors I interviewed, two of them said they received quite a number of essays from female students on these subjects; one of them, in fact, often shares his own writing about his sexual abuse with the class (along with other pieces he is working on not related to abuse) and told me he has never felt uncomfortable or that it is inappropriate for him to be doing so. The one male teacher who gets these essays less frequently shared his concerns about the psychological effect he may have on such students, a concern informed by his own experience with relatives who are psychologists or psychoanalysts. Because there are so few male teachers relative to females on the staff at UNH, it is difficult for me to speculate on the question of a teacher's gender.

9. Within the context of this study, I will not be addressing issues of transference or writing as self-sabotage. These are certainly important issues to study, but they are outside my research methods and professional expertise, so I leave them for future research.

10. In 1995, Alicia Pipkin Condon, a senior at the University of New Hampshire, wrote a research project for the McNair Graduate Opportunity Program (hosted by UNH) where she argues that literature which addresses sexual abuse needs to become part of secondary school curriculum. Based on her own and other students' experiences, Alicia suggests that such readings offer important opportunities for students to understand and share their own sexual abuse.
11. Gofman notes that "apparently in middle class circles today, the more there is about the individual that deviates in an undesirable direction from what might have been expected to be true of him, the more he is obliged to volunteer information about himself, even though the cost to him of candor may have increased proportionately . . . . Here, the right to reticence seems earned only by having nothing to hide" (64).

12. Despite Susan Miller's contention that composition pedagogies (whether expressivist or social constructionist) have rendered all student writing "inconsequential" vis-a-vis public (59-61), rhetorical discourse, when students who have been abused and suffer from eating disorders adopt the "normalizing" functions of college writing, some of them do so as a beginning rhetorical and public position from which to speak. It is often a more protected one than those outside the university, but quite consequential to them.

13. Because Carole Spitzack's argument about the politics of body reduction for women depends on confession, I'll defer a discussion of this until Chapter 4.

14. This included popular short stories, magazines, etiquette books, "hortative stories for older children and youth," marital advice manuals, childrearing advice, materials produced for businesses aimed at prescribing responses to emotion, and numerous interview studies from the 1930s to the present (11-12). Most of this material focuses on professional and middle class business people in the North and West, particularly those of Protestant background.

15. This redefinition of emotions was influenced by a number of factors: changes in gender relations, new concerns for children's behavior, less supervised time for adolescents, industrialization and its partners, consumerism and "a management-based service economy," as well as low birthrates, changes in personal values, and new concerns about the health of the body (227, 193).

16. Students may also be counting on the "inconsequential nature" of college writing as it has developed since the nineteenth century (Miller 59-61). While that may be true, it doesn't necessarily mean such writing cannot lead to publically consequential writing later, once they have begun to try on an academic identity that affords necessary protection in their view (nor does all writing have to be purposeful in public ways). The subjects themselves have been so politicized and imbued with cultural critiques and issues of power that their public relevance now seems a given.

17. So many students mentioned that writing seemed to protect them from psychological scrutiny, a challenge to Susan Miller's argument about the clinical functions of college writing where attention to mechanical correctness (historically) turned students' texts into "instruments for examining the 'body' of a student" (57). While some teacher's fear examining a student's body and psyche by attending to the craft of an essay on bodily violence, some students conceive of teachers quite differently.
18. I don't want to deny the effects of unconscious motivations here, but I think it important to recognize whatever ways students do make choices about what to disclose and what not. The fact that some recognize the restraints of the rhetorical situation—and the influence of private disclosure on their perceived identity—all suggest they are not simply passive or reenacting an "egocentric" imitation of tabloid revelations.

19. See, for example, Katie Roiphe and a recent review of Kathryn Harrison's memoir, *The Kiss*, where the reviewer questions how male reviewers have dismissed the text as "trash . . . not an artful word in it" (Jonathan Yardley in the *Washington Post*) (Alther 34).

20. My thanks to Cinthia Gannett for suggesting these questions to me.

21. As one form of postmodern pedagogy, Jarratt's position is informed by a feminist theory which challenges postmodernism to have a "theory of positive social action" (Faigley 20), thus it does not fully become what Lynn Worsham would call a "wild pedagogy," a type of postmodern pedagogy that dislocates a subject from all structures of meaning and emotion (133). The context of this wild pedagogy creates a different set of issues for students who write about sexual abuse, thus I will defer a fuller discussion until later in the essay.


23. I am indebted to Cinthia Gannett for introducing this text to me during her graduate seminar on the history and art of journal writing.

24. Such "authorizing prefaces" were common in the published narratives of other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century marginalized writers like Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglas, and the Shakers.

25. According to some historians, this was common. If a man was convicted of sexual deviance, he was often reintegrated into the community within a year or two, regardless of his standing in the town. In a divorce case from the late eighteenth century, a woman accused her husband of incest with their fourteen-year-old daughter, but then dropped the charges and accepted him back into the family when he decided to reform (at his wife's request) (D'Emilio and Freedman 25).

26. See Michelle Fine and Linda Brodkey's article, "Presence of Mind in the Absence of Body" where they analyze sexual harassment narratives. Although they were not asked to, most of the college women who responded went to great lengths to explain why the professor behaved as he did, rarely discussing the impact it had on the woman herself.

27. It may not be surprising that Phebe joined a religious group committed to celibacy and gender egalitarianism. Their founder, Ann Lee, was herself a survivor of abuse from her husband, as well as from townspeople who rejected her message.
28. Students' names have been changed and, where requested, some details have been altered to respect students' privacy.

29. In this particular course, Emily and I met a total of four times in conference, and this essay was her third of five. There was little time for us to meet individually and thus little opportunity for anything like a therapeutic relationship to even be sensed, let alone developed. During the conference when we discussed this essay, Emily was clear with me that she wanted to work on the draft as a piece of writing (though as she says, not the grammar), that she did not want my compassion and concern to overshadow our talk about how she might shape the draft to become more effective.

30. Although many feminists have argued that speaking about one's sexual abuse can become a method of transforming the culture that condones it, doing so within a university writing course raises new issues: what in particular can be changed when a professor and/or students are the audience? how politically powerful can college writing be? what is the focus of the course, "writing," self-analysis, social critique?

31. When I met with Fanny two years after she had written this essay, her first comment as she reread it was, "Boy, this is dripping with anger and intense feelings. I forgot about that."

32. Carol Barringer, in her article "The Survivor's Voice: Breaking the Incest Taboo" (NWSA Journal 4.1, Spring 1992: 4-22), identifies several linguistic characteristics of sexual abuse narratives, one of them being the use of euphemism.

33. None of the students in my study were required to write about this abuse, as Swartzlander, et al imply. A number of therapists I interviewed asserted that someone who has been abused will not speak or write about it until s/he feels psychically able to.

34. The first two lines of a poem in Zelda Fitzgerald's novel, Save Me the Waltz:
   Why am I this way, why am I that?
   Why do myself and I constantly spat?
   Which is the reasonable, logical me?
   Which is the one who must will it to be? (69)

35. One of the earliest twentieth-century researchers of eating disorders, Hilde Bruch, describes how anorexic women deny their bodies' physical impulses, develop heightened sensations, and experience themselves as all mind without a body. Some of the young women she quotes say, "Everything became very intense and very intellectual, but absolutely untouchable"; "Being hungry has the same effect as a drug, and you feel outside your body. You are truly beside yourself—and then you are in a different state of consciousness and you can undergo pain without reacting" (The Golden Cage 13-17). Noelle Caskey, in discussing Bruch, emphasizes "the ecstatic nature of the anorexia experience" (184) from both a physiological and psychological perspective, but cultural
theorist like Sandra Bartky and Susan Bordo suggest this pleasure is produced because such bodily discipline give women a sense of power and mastery— as an exaggeration of femininity in Western culture, anorexia illustrates how a woman's identity is structured around physically disciplining and mastering the unruly body.

36. Noelle Caskey brings together Freudian and Jungian theories to argue that anorexia can be interpreted as both a form of "psychic incest" and as a call to the mother for help. From a Jungian perspective to reject fat is to "reject... the sexually mature feminine as represented by the maternal image. It is unity with the father against the mother and all that the mother represents" (187). As "psychic incest," anorexia is "a rejection of the mother and the mother's body in favor of a delusional relationship with this pure male adolescent spirit [puer aeternus] who has all the spiritual attributes of the divine masculine youth." This psychic incest occurs in women whose relationships with their fathers emphasize the "life of the mind" (185). In striving for order, control, and a sense of competence, anorexics internalize a "secret aspect," a separate masculine person whose masculinity commands more respect and value. "Their overslim appearance," Bruch says, their remarkable athletic performances, with perseverance to the point of exhaustion, give them the proud conviction of being as good as a man, and keep the "little man," the "evil spirit," or some other magic force from tormenting them with guilt and shame. (Golden 55-56)

But even as anorexia "results from a psychically incestuous relationship with the father, it is simultaneously an expression of that relationship ... and a defense against it, an attempt to escape domination." Turning to Freudian theory where anorexia is interpreted as "an oral impregnation phobia," Caskey suggests anorexia is also a warding off of the father, a fear of being impregnated by him and "imprisoned by him" completely. The disease can be a "cry to the mother for help," and treatment usually emphasizes strengthening the mother-daughter bond (Caskey 187). While most psychoanalysts now reject the oral impregnation theory, feminists like Orbach reach similar conclusions about the anorexic's relationship with her mother: because the mother has been socialized to suppress her desires for both "dependency gratification and autonomy," she disciplines her daughter to suppress them as well, complicating even further the separation/individuation process for both of them ("Accepting" 84-85). Feeling "emotionally unentitled and undeserving," the daughter develops anorexia as a safeguard against her neediness (Orbach, "Visibility" 136).

37. For summaries of these theories, see Brumberg 24-40, and Gimlim. For more detailed discussions of particular perspectives, see Bruch, Orbach, Katz, and David M. Garner and Paul E. Garfinkel's Handbok of Psychotherapy for Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia.

38. See Brumberg 25-27, Katz.

39. As with all three of the terms I'm using in this study (sexual abuse, eating disorders, and physical abuse), not only are definitions slippery, but the accuracy of statistics are questionable. It is difficult to generalize on whether and how much eating disorder cases...
have increased because diagnostic criteria is not standardized (Brumberg 11), thus it is difficult to know who is being counted for what particular symptoms. At the same time, it is hard to know the extent to which eating disordered behavior was prevalent before the twentieth-century focus on and dissemination of information about it.

40. Rose L. Squires and Dona Kagan conducted a study that concluded compulsive eating among college women was linked to the women's desires to be more feminine, not less (as some of the psychological research has posited). Seeing this as a refutation of Orbach's theories, these researchers did not see how their conclusions further illustrated feminist cultural theories that women become so invested in achieving feminine ideals (which also require a repudiation of the feminine—neediness, desire, and so on) that an eating disorder becomes a manifestation of such femininity.

41. See Bordo, page 46 and note 2 on the same page; Hastings and Kern; Kearney-Cooke and Striegel-Moore.

42. Thanks to Melody Graulich for directing me to this.

43. Because only three students who wrote about being abused by their boyfriends agreed to work with me, I am not able to draw conclusions about particular patterns in the essays. While none of the essays about physical abuse were about long-term or ongoing violence, these three all described beatings the young women had received from boyfriends (of similar age) who lashed out at the women in often jealous anger, trying to use violence to prevent the women from leaving.

44. See Swartzlander, et al; Bass and Davis. Janet Leibman Jacobs refers to Judith Jordan's term "faulty empathy" to describe this: "a personality construct in which the individual's self boundaries are extremely permeable and thus she cannot easily distinguish between her needs and the needs of others" (70).

45. Personal interview, Dianne Rice, M.S., L.S.W.. CCDC III of Pathways to Recovery, Centerville, Ohio.

46. As I noted in the previous chapter, it is not unusual for victims of abuse to suffer from eating disorders, a way to "regulate their internal emotional states" (Herman 109) that is also a reenactment of the abuse (and a sign the victim has few methods of self-care) (Herman 166). As I discuss later, Ann came from a family where alcoholism, verbal abuse, and possibly physical abuse was the norm, so her relationship with her boyfriend was one factor among many that may have precipitated her anorexia.

47. My thanks to Patricia Sullivan for drawing my attention to these shifts in agency.

48. For more detailed arguments than the ones I will present later, see Richard J. Gelles and Donileen R. Loeske, editors, Current Controversies on Family Violence (an excellent text for both overview and specificity); Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery; Gerald T.


50. For an historical perspective on domestic violence and how it has been conceptualized, see Linda Gordon, Heroes in Their Own Lives.

51. On this same page and the next Gelles describes these characteristics in more detail.

52. Kersti A. Yllo takes issue with some sociological theories that argue violence is a conflict strategy (a way of managing conflict) and asserts that it is "a tactic of coercive control to maintain the husband's power" (52).

53. Again I thank Patricia Sullivan for drawing my attention to this.

54. This is not necessarily to argue that all qualitative researchers need to make this choice for these reasons. It is difficult in retrospect to know whether I made the best choice—in some cases, as I reviewed transcripts, I could see that my own disclosures may have seemed self-indulgent to the students and understandably irrelevant. In other cases, like Ann's, they seemed to make students more comfortable talking with me and willing to share much more than they included in their essays. Even this kind of relationship between researcher and participant has been recently critiqued as potentially seductive for unwitting participants who may not realize that they may be disclosing negative or damaging information (see Newkirk, "Seduction and Betrayal"). To address this issue I have changed various details of students' lives and essays, and in one particular case chose not to include a student because the background she offered about her life was so complicated and unusual that I could not safely create a credible pseudonym/persona. Although she talked about these details of her life for over an hour with me (with very little interruption from me or opportunity for it), and her corpus of writing was rich, evocative, and fascinating, I am ambivalent about my responsibility for what she told me.

55. As Katerina described this to me: "[I try] to get them to see [context] in more concrete ways. And I use the quilt and then I use this diagram to sort of talk about that, and very much about context. And what I say is everybody has this little center, this black square that is your self and then we have all these different layers of how we view things, how we look at things, but what makes this a nice picture is when all the squares will come together and all the colors work together. . . . but it really works and then I have this actual
diagram that I write out where I put different things in each of the layers and how they connect and how they overlap and how I see texts overlapping and all that.

56. Taken from a student's course evaluation.

57. Stearns is careful, however, to avoid making direct evaluative statements like this about the impact of these new emotion standards (see Chapter 10).

58. Unlike male war veterans, Ann has not been expected to use violence against others and is solely a victim of other males' violence. As a woman, she also has less cultural support for writing about her abuse than O'Brien does. It seems significant, however, that Ann focused on subjects where the victims she empathized with were also, at times, perpetrators (the IRA, rap stars who sing about sexual and physical violence against women (though the women singers who reject these lyrics were the ones who initiated her reassessment of rap), and Vietnam vets).

59. See Bell, pages 28-30.

60. See Tal for a fuller discussion of the differences race and sexual orientation have on sexual abuse victims and their writings.
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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION
AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
LETTER OF INVITATION

Michelle Payne
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207-363-6575

Dear (401/501 Instructor/Teaching Assistant)

About four years ago three women in my first-year writing course handed in papers narrating how each of them had been raped or molested by a relative. Two of them also wrote about the eating disorders they developed afterward. Since then, at least one woman in each of my classes has written about such issues, and I've realized how many questions this raises for me as a writing teacher and a woman who has struggled with similar experiences.

I would like to pursue some of these questions with the writing staff as part of a larger project, and that is why I am writing to you. I know many of us receive papers about physical or sexual abuse and/or anorexia or bulimia, and I am wondering if you would be willing to talk with me about those papers, the students, and the ways you have responded to them both. If you have students who are writing about these issues in the courses you are currently teaching and you would be willing to work with me in any way, I would be especially grateful if you could contact me as soon as possible.

I want to emphasize that I am not approaching this study as an expert who has a hypothesis that she wants to prove with willing subjects. I am a writing teacher and a woman who has written about and dealt with these issues herself, who has a lot of questions, and I want to explore these questions with other writing teachers, students who are dealing with physical or sexual abuse and/or anorexia/bulimia, and with the groups on campus who deal with these issues daily. What I want to do is look at the context within in which these students are writing about these issues—what may be happening in the class to influence their writing, their relationship with their teacher and their peers, their previous writing experiences, readings, peer responses, the influence of popular culture (ads, self-help books, TV programs, movies, etc.), what is happening in their life outside the writing class, and so on. I also want to pursue how we might best respond to these issues and our students.

I would appreciate any responses you have—any insights, concerns you have about students writing about these experiences, problems you have had or forsee, ways you have responded to these issues, any readings or writings, or other people I can talk to. I see this as a collaborative project, one whose primary concern is the students, and I hope you feel comfortable talking with me about it. I don't have an office this semester, so the best place to reach me will be at home at the above number, or in the halls. I may occasionally be in pseudo-graduate lounge in room 52, and I will be in many of the staff meetings, as well. My mailbox is in the Graduate Office downstairs (#2), so feel free to drop me a note or materials and I'll get back with you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks!
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for Students

What writing assignments, readings, comments by your teacher, etc. prompted you to write about this experience?

Why did you choose to write about it?

Tell me about what happened as you wrote about this. What did you struggle with? What do you feel works well? How did you feel as you wrote it? compared to the other writings in the class? To what extent did you think about your audience and their possible responses?

How did you decide to shape this draft? How does this draft compare with your sense of what "college writing" should look like? With your sense of your teacher's belief about what makes writing effective?

What did you believe you needed to leave out of this draft? Why?

How did you expect your teacher to respond to this draft? In what ways would those responses have been helpful or harmful?

How did your teacher respond to this draft? How did you feel about her response? What role did she play, if any, in the development of this draft, in your thinking on it, your trust in sharing it?

How did you expect your peers to respond?

If you shared this in a workshop, how did your peers respond? How did you feel about that? How did their responses influence your revision?

What have you read over the years about this subject, or seen on television, movies, etc.? If you did research on this topic, tell me about what you read. What did you learn that was new? How did it influence your writing and understanding of your experience?

Have you been or are you now in therapy? How has that affected your writing of this draft, do you think?

At the Conclusion of the Course

Tell me about what you feel you've learned in this class.

How has your writing developed, changed, or not?
How would you evaluate the course? The teacher? Your work in the class?

Tell me about the papers you chose to revise for a grade, and why. What relationship, if any, do you see among the papers you wrote in the course?

If you were to revise this draft, what might you do?

* * *

Questions for Instructors on Staff—General

General questions

1) How long have you been teaching writing courses?

2) In that time, how many students would you say have written about these issues *per class* (an estimate)? In other courses?

3) In your experience, has the number of students writing about these issues changed over the years? In what ways? Why do you think that is?

4) How do you generally respond to the student and his/her writing, or what do you need to know before you decide how to respond?

5) How often does the student develop the paper further?

6) Have you noticed patterns in the ways these issues are generally written about? (eg, narrative, third-person, first-person, research, etc.)

7) Does the student generally drop hints in earlier papers about these issues, or are there certain cues you pick up on?

8) How does the student respond to you? the paper? to her peers? to the rest of his/her courses? Does writing about these issues seem to intensify the trauma for them, immobilizing them by the pain, or become a part of the process of healing, or . . . ?

9) Why do you believe students write about these issues in the university classroom? In your particular classroom?

10) What issues does that raise for us as writing teachers in terms of our roles, our expectations, beliefs about writing, evaluation, our relationship to students, to the larger culture?

11) How do you feel about students writing about these issues?
12) What role, if any, do you believe writing about such issues has in the student's development as a writer?

13) Do you feel you have the resources you need in order to respond to these students and their writing in the ways you believe are important? If so, what are they? If not, what else might be helpful?

14) What texts or readings in particular have helped you in knowing how to respond to these issues?

15) What other comments do you have? Are there any questions I haven't asked that seem important, or other issues I haven't raised?

Interview Questions for Instructors/Teaching Assistants Whose Students are Writing About Abuse or Eating Disorders

**Context for the Course**

1) Tell me about your course: what do you see as the purpose of English 401 or 501? What do you believe your students need to learn about writing?

2) What kinds of writing do you require/encourage in the course? Why? Are these given informally, formally?

3) What kinds of readings? texts about writing or handbooks? film or other media? popular or "classical" texts? Why?

4) How do you respond to the writing the students do? Conferences? Written comments?

5) How do you evaluate your students? Based on what criteria? Do they know that at the beginning, or create the criteria themselves, or?

6) What are your policies regarding attendance, participation, discipline, late work, etc.? (possibly on policy sheet or syllabus)

7) What kind of relationship do you try to develop with your students? Why?

8) How do you define a writing teacher's role, or, what are the limits of a writing teacher's role? Why?

9) What kind of atmosphere do you try to develop in the classroom? Why? How?

10) What kinds of relationships do you hope will develop among your students? Why?
11) What would you say, then, is your philosophy of teaching writing?

Context for specific paper

12) Tell me about what you've done in the course up to this point.

13) At what point in the course did this student begin writing about these issues? In response to what assignment or activity, if any?

14) What was your initial response after reading it? Where were you, at home or office alone? with student?

15) What concerns did you have? Why?

16) How did you respond to the writing with the student? Why?

17) What writing has the student done since? has s/he continued to write on this subject?

18) Did the student choose to share this in a workshop? If so, what is your sense of the group's response?

General questions

19) How long have you been teaching writing courses?

20) In that time, how many students would you say have written about these issues per class (an estimate)? In other courses?

21) In your experience, has the number of students writing about these issues changed over the years? In what ways? Why do you think that is?

22) Why do you believe this student in particular, but other students in general write about these issues in the university classroom?

23) What issues does that raise for us as writing teachers in terms of our roles, our expectations, beliefs about writing, our relationship to students, to the larger culture?

24) How do you feel about students writing about these issues?

25) What role, if any, do you believe writing about such issues has in the student's development as a writer?

26) Do you feel you have the resources you need in order to respond to these students and
their writing in the ways you believe are important? If so, what are they? If not, what else might be helpful?

27) What texts or readings in particular have helped you in knowing how to respond to these issues?

28) What other comments do you have? Are there any questions I haven't asked that seem important?

Interview Questions for Therapists/Counselors

In your opinion, why might students decide to write about their abuse or eating disorders in First-Year Composition?

How would you recommend writing teachers approach these subjects and students? What concerns do you have?

What are some of the risks teachers and students encounter when writing and responding to these issues?

How have you seen popular culture texts on these issues ("self-help" books) influence (if at all) students who are dealing with these issues?

Approximately how many students come to the Counseling Center for these issues?

What texts might you recommend for me to read as I do my research?
APPENDIX B

STUDENT ESSAYS
My family is charming. Through generations on both sides of my parents' family, the apocryphal tales and myths are all about dapper, witty men, and women who were warm, talented mothers. I collected these people and the stories about them with zeal; they gave me an identity, a persona, a tradition. The marbled box with a brass latch which contained all the faded photos of many of these relatives came to me after my mother's death. When my children were small, their favorite amusement when confined to bed with a cold was to sort these dog-eared pictures and listen to my stories about each of them. My brothers and sister and I will once a year or so talk about finally putting all these faded relics into an album. We actually started an album when we were children; it was one of those square hard-covered books with black construction paper pages, held together with grosgrain ribbon. We had a little cellophane envelope full of corners. I remember sitting in my twin bed, with Vicks Vapo-rub on my chest, wrapped in one of my father's old cashmere mufflers, endlessly sorting and arranging these pictures, sticking them carefully into the album. My mother told me the same tales that I later told to my children.

I am telling you some of those stories, to give you some sense of the charm, the beguiling charm of some of my ancestors. I don't know for sure if all these stories are literally true, but that doesn't matter much any more; their impact has been just as great whether or not they are "true". Now that I know more truth, I am also trying to find
a place for these stories. They deserve some honor; the women especially deserve great honor. The women may not have always behaved with honor, but they were doing the best they could to survive, to survive with humor, hard work, and love for their children. Now, I am looking at all those charming people with new eyes. Now, I know I am part of a long line of abused women, and that I, too, was both abused and was unable to see when my daughter was, in turn, abused.

My grandfather on my mother’s side was a man I never met, nor was he ever discussed in my presence except once or twice when I was perhaps four or five. All I remember was the voices of my parents, whispering very loudly (you know those tones) in the living room after we were supposedly asleep. Apparently, that grandfather had written to my mother asking to see us. My mother absolutely refused to listen to my father’s argument that they should let the past go, that he deserved to know his grandchildren, and that he must be harmless now. My mother was beyond reason of this sort, and absolutely would not even allow a response to her father’s request. I think I must have asked her about this overheard conversation, because I can think of no other way I could have learned about this man. She told me then, and in little bits more as I grew up, that my grandfather was very rich, kept a mistress, and was extremely handsome. He gave my mother and her brother all the best, they had cooks and maids, and the family lived in great style in Oak Park, Illinois. He was also a Christian Scientist. When my grandmother became ill with stomach cancer, he would not allow her medical
attention. Now, telling this part of the story, I can hear my mother's voice as she told me this part - her father held her mother on the kitchen table, with my mother and uncle present as young children, while she died in extreme pain, screaming and weeping in front of her children. My charming grandfather did that.

Another brief story about that grandfather: when I was about twelve, long after he had died, I was rummaging about in the garage on a hot summer afternoon and came upon a box of papers. Examining these papers (how did I know that this was wrong?), I found a marriage certificate, for a marriage between my mother and a man named Bird. Again, I asked my mother about her past. She spoke to me about reading another's papers and respect for her privacy, but she must have known how important it was to answer my questions. Maybe she was finally able to talk about this man and why, she had married him. Mr. Bird was apparently much older when she met him, a successful lawyer. He met her and married her when she was only sixteen, shortly after her mother's death. He eloped with her to New York, where they were married in a civil ceremony. When my grandfather found out that she had run away from his house and married one of his business acquaintances, he sent private detectives to New York. They took my mother into custody, and returned to Milwaukee with her. There, she was locked into her room, and her father had the marriage annulled. Although my mother went on to complete college and later marry my father, she never forgave her father for this action. She never forgave him for anything he did to her.
On my father's side, the charming patriarchy is just as evident. I never met that grandfather, either, but I knew my grandmother quite well. This grandfather, whose pictures were still extant in the family collection, was indeed, very good looking, with a high smooth forehead, bright eyes with wrinkles at the corners, a straight nose and a smiling mouth. You just knew that he would swoop you up into his arms and talk to you as an adult. He, too, made a lot of money, although he was more of an arriviste (second generation German) than my mother's father. He designed and sold men's clothing, and he was twice elected Commodore of the Milwaukee Yacht Club. According to myth, he, too, collected mistresses, and was an excellent poker player. He, too, was an absent father, as we say these days. My mother once told me that he beat his wife with his malacca walking stick; I have no way of knowing if that story is true, but I do know that it was part of the whispered history about this grandfather.

My father was the youngest of five, late arriving, and protected by the older children and his mother from both the brutality of his father, and from any other harsh realities. He grew up as the adored, pampered and indulged. But he inherited the vicious amoral part from his father. He also inherited the fabled charm; my father could tell a story like no-one else. He was witty, well-read, and talented. He taught me how to do many different household crafts, from painting a window sash properly to building the perfect fire. He never learned how to make a living, however, and spent much of our childhood escaping my mother's anger with the perfect martini and the perfect excuse. I believe he molested me when I was very young, and that in
a totally perverted way, he doted on me. I was the oldest, and the first
to experience both his charm and his filth. He was rotten to the core;
in fact, I don’t think he had a core in the sense of having a character,
some sort of moral sense. He stole my brothers’ caddying money
from their dressers, he lied and lied and lied. But, by god, he was
charming. He could present himself in the best possible light, and he
fooled a lot of people. He even fooled us children into loving him; I
spent a long time persuading myself that he loved us, but now I am
able to see that love which allows what he allowed himself is not love
by any decent definition.

My mother has been sainted since her death about fifteen years
ago, but there are some revisionists afoot in the family. I am one of
them. She was incredibly demanding of us. Some of these standards
of honesty and decency are part of me today, but also some of the
intolerance of fuzzy thinking and sloppy behavior are, too. I am
beginning to understand that she needed to hold herself to such a high
standard and to control both herself and her children in order to save
us all from the abuse she had experienced. No terror and no anger
were allowed, because these emotions represented a loss of control;
there is nothing worse than the lack of control a child has over an
abusive parent. No amount of high achievement in school or in life will
relieve that terror or release that anger, but I certainly tried.

The process of revision is, I believe, part of the reason for one
brother’s defection from the family; he speaks politely if spoken to by
my sister or me, but he has essentially cut himself out. By doing so,
he deprived his own two children of their aunts and cousins, and us of
them. There aren't many of us left, and we try to guard the worthwhile as we move forward. Over the past few years, my brother, sister, and I have slowly begun to reconstruct our childhoods. One will contribute a funny story, another will summon the courage to tell another horror story. One will not remember one thing from a certain time (significant in itself, of course), while another can relate an incident or a season in great detail. One brother, the one who has divorced us, will not or can not enter this dialogue. He seems to prefer an unreconstructed past to the alternative, which we each know from experience, is exceedingly painful but invaluable to our lives now. Part of this process has taken place in the therapist's office for each of us, but I have learned that the most revealing experiences have come in the process of remembering together. That remembering inevitably leads to the revision I mentioned; admitting that an abusive and inadequate father may have loved each of us and contributed to each self today, or that a mother who fiercely held us together and somehow scraped together the means to send us each to prep school, who cooked up a storm for us when we returned home on vacations, also coldly rejected my sister and me at times when we needed her most. She may have been brilliant and delightful, but she was also harsh, demanding and adept at 'not knowing'.

I was finally forced into this revision, which meant removing some of the blinders which enabled me to function, when my daughter began to remember the sexual abuse which tore her life to pieces. She finally confronted me with her anger, her sense that she deserved my protection and comfort. Although she and I have much more to
a place for these stories. They deserve some honor, the women especially deserve great honor. The women may not have always behaved with honor, but they were doing the best they could to survive, to survive with humor, hard work, and love for their children. Now, I am looking at all those charming people with new eyes. Now, I know I am part of a long line of abused women, and that I, too, was both abused and was unable to see when my daughter was, in turn, abused.

My grandfather on my mother's side was a man I never met, nor was he ever discussed in my presence except once or twice when I was perhaps four or five. All I remember was the voices of my parents, whispering very loudly (you know those tones) in the living room after we were supposedly asleep. Apparently, that grandfather had written to my mother asking to see us. My mother absolutely refused to listen to my father's argument that they should let the past go, that he deserved to know his grandchildren, and that he must be harmless now. My mother was beyond reason of this sort, and absolutely would not even allow a response to her father's request. I think I must have asked her about this overheard conversation, because I can think of no other way I could have learned about this man. She told me then, and in little bits more as I grew up, that my grandfather was very rich, kept a mistress, and was extremely handsome. He gave my mother and her brother all the best, they had cooks and maids, and the family lived in great style in Oak Park, Illinois. He was also a Christian Scientist. When my grandmother became ill with stomach cancer, he would not allow her medical
do. Her act of courage helped me begin the long slow process of knowing that she and I were part of generations of abuse. I finally was able to see that my mother and her mother before her had been abused. This abuse has taken many forms through the years; I told you a few stories in the beginning of this piece. I am just like my mother: I somehow managed not to know most of what happened to my daughter in her teens; I was too busy being just like my mother. She was dying during this crucial period and I left my own children often to be with her as she died slowly of cancer. Now, I understand that during that same period in my own life, she was not there for me either. It is no surprise that she refused to come to me when I was twenty, in labor with my daughter, alone in another city. This pattern of refusal or inability to know or to be there with open heart at the most important times is part of the legacy of this charming family. These loving women each have a cold hard spot in their hearts. Each of us has been damaged in some brutal way and has protected herself, closed off a part.

I am beginning to understand that I may never recover lost pieces of my own past. I am beginning to understand that the myths and tattered photos may be valid and important. But I will never forget that what is hidden behind the curtain of wit and charm is just as much part of the reconstruction I do. When I rebuild that past, I am beginning the process of inventing or maybe transforming my future. No amount of revision is going to influence that future if I cannot summon the courage to look behind that curtain.
Nicole's Essay

Child Sexual Abuse

I can't remember the first time it happened. I know I wasn't very old though, probably about three. It continued until I reached the age of ten. Usually he just touched me. He'd call me over to his chair, it was a green recliner with his afghan thrown over the back in case he got cold. Mom and Dad were at work, Grampa in the garden, and Grammie upstairs. He'd say that he wanted some company, that he felt lonely. I knew by this time not to disobey him because he'd tell everyone what a bad, dirty girl I was. I'd go over to him and stand by the side of that awful green recliner. He'd pull my pants down and start fondling me. It always hurt a little bit, but I'd just stand there until he was finished. When he got done I'd pull my pants up and he'd grab my arm. This was when he told me that this was our secret and if I told anyone bad things would happen. At six years old of course I believed him.

Unfortunately, my story is not uncommon. One out of four girls and one out of six boys are sexually assaulted by the time they are eighteen (Interview Dec. 2, 1992). The effects of this form of abuse are devastating. Not a day goes by that I don't think about what Alfred did to me. He was my uncle, an old man who lived with us because he couldn't live on his own anymore. A man that supposedly I could trust, an adult authority figure.

Sexual abuse is not what I think about when I remember my childhood, but it certainly is a big part of it. I'm affected by it even now, almost ten years later. In order for this abuse to end our society needs to wake up. We have to work together, family, schools, and the legal system to stop this heinous abuse against children.

It was a normal afternoon. Wendy and I were playing in my room. Wendy decided she wanted to watch TV. I didn't want to. Karl was out there. She insisted so we went to the family room. I don't remember exactly how it happened but Karl tried to grab Wendy and me. Wendy started screaming and Grammie ran down the stairs. Relief swept through me. I thought Karl would stop touching me forever and Grammie would kick him out for being a bad man. It didn't happen that way. I guess Karl said he would never try anything again so Grammie didn't tell anyone. Grammie called Wendy's mom. I don't know what she told her but soon after she came to pick Wendy up. Wendy never came over again. Grammie told me that Karl was sorry and not to tell anyone. I trusted Grammie so I believed her.

I have never understood why people don't report child abuse. As I sat in a restaurant a couple of weeks ago I overheard a woman talking at the next table and it reminded me of what happened with my grandmother. The lady said, "I thought they were abusing their kids, but I wasn't sure so I didn't report it." I wanted to scream at her. It's much better to be overly cautious than to have an innocent child hurt. According to Gail Wyatt and Gloria Powell, in 1984 200,000 child sexual abuse cases were reported in nineteen states. Only half of them were confirmed but many more were probably legitimate. Due to a lack of social workers and the amount of work that they undertake it is no wonder that many of the cases were overlooked (Wyatt and Powell 11). These figures don't even take into account the countless children who, like me, remain silent about their abuse. According to Elizabeth Stanko only...
about six percent of women sexually abused as children ever tell the authorities and one out of five had never told anyone (25). To me, this shows how prevalent sexual abuse is in our society and how hard it is for children and adult survivors to tell their experiences. In the words of Wyatt and Powell, "Children under the age of eighteen are often subjected to physical and psychological coercion to ensure their participation and silence in abusive relationships" (12).

Even if a child does speak out and say that someone has touched him/her, often no one believes the child (Wyatt & Powell 12). Many people think that children just make up stories. The SHARPP advocate that I interviewed told me that children don't make up these stories. She said that only about two percent of women who claim to be raped are lying and the number is probably even less for children who claim to have been molested. Yet still so many people refuse to listen. For example, in Nap Time, the true story of the New Jersey day care where children were sexually abused, no one paid attention when Johnathan, a four year old boy, told them what was going on. His mom took him to the doctor because his personality was changing. As the nurse took his temperature rectally Johnathan told her that Kelly did that to him at the day care. The nurse knew that temperatures were taken by using plastic strips on the forehead, but she didn't say anything to the doctor. Johnathan's mother wasn't paying attention and didn't hear what Johnathan said (12).

When children tell, either right after the abuse occurs or years later the person they tell might make light of the situation. "They (abused children) are often ignored, punished, and not supported by nonabusing adults and professionals" (Wyatt and Powell 12). Sexual abuse has been a taboo subject in our society for so long that people just don't want to deal with it and sometimes ignore its consequences. In fact, in 1952 a study by Bender and Gruett as documented by Wyatt and Powell found that there were no long-term negative effects of child sexual abuse. They studied fifteen individuals who were abuse survivors and claimed all of them suffered no adverse effects as a result of the abuse. In actuality, when Jon Conte and John Schuerman reviewed the case reports years later they found that only two of the fifteen hadn't experienced any major problems. The remaining went through such horrors as drug and alcohol abuse, hospitalization, and suicide (Wyatt and Powell 158).

In my case, my grandmother made light of my abuse. I couldn't visit her because she lived in the house where I was molested. Mom asked if she could tell her why I wouldn't visit. When Grammie first found out that Karl had molested me she couldn't figure out why I was bringing up something that happened so long ago. She believed it was totally irrelevant. Since then I guess she's changed her attitude, but it will never make up for her betrayal of her To me, it was almost like she'd taken Karl's side.

Often in cases of child sexual abuse the survivor feels great amounts of guilt (Stanko 25). Sometimes people don't like talking about sexual abuse, the survivor feels that it was in some way her fault.

Usually, Karl told me what a good girl I was to behave and let him touch me. He tried to be soothing so I wouldn't think what he did was wrong. I remember one day, I guess I was about seven, he asked me to do something new. He wanted me to perform fellatio on him. I think this was the only time he made me do it, but it was a real turning point for me. I had to touch him now, it wasn't him touching me. I started feeling extremely guilty that I was doing this to him. It made me feel so disgusting. I still don't remember everything that I felt.
that day, but I do remember running to the bathroom after and gagging. I brushed my teeth repeatedly as if that would change what he'd made me do. It was that day that I promised myself never to tell anyone because everyone would think that I was a dirty, terrible girl.

I don't know why children and even adult survivors blame themselves. Sometimes, even now, I wonder if I couldn't have done anything to stop Karl. I know it wasn't my fault, but every once in a while I find myself thinking about why I didn't do anything. Ellen Bass and Laura Davis say in their book *The Courage to Heal* that children blame themselves for many reasons. Some children were told that they were bad and dirty. Others were punished or ignored when they did tell someone. Even never discussing the subject with children can lead them to believe it is a terrible dirty thing (104).

It is never the fault of the child. In the words of Bass and Davis, "It is always the responsibility of the adult to behave with respect toward children" (107). It has only been recently that children in school have been taught about good touching and bad touching (Bass and Davis 107). At least now schools are teaching children that they have control over their own bodies and that they have the right to say no. More of these programs are necessary in order to let children know that abuse is not their fault and it is good to tell someone.

Many times sexual abuse survivors have low self-esteem. When someone degrades you by using your body it is hard to feel good about yourself. As stated by Bass and Davis, most survivors were told that they were to blame and that they would never amount to anything. Quite a few survivors think that they have to do well all the time. This helps to compensate because they feel they "messed up" as children by being abused.

The most apparent result of my own abuse is that I feel I must always be in control. I had no control over the situation with Karl so now I try to control all other areas of my life. Like everyone else I want things to go my way, but I sometimes get a little obsessive about it. Bass and Davis say this is a very normal feeling for a survivor: "Control is a thread that runs through the lives of survivors" (43). As one survivor said, "I have an incredible attachment to things going my way. It feels like I'm going to die if I don't get my way" (43-44). Control can be positive, but its negative effects make it hard for people to be flexible. For example, sometimes I find myself needing to know exactly what my boyfriend is doing and who he is with. I trust him completely, but when I'm thinking about Karl I feel I must control Mike so he can't hurt me.

It seems strange that control is a big part of survivors' lives for it is also a big part of the lives of perpetrators. In 1989 Jane Gilgun and Teresa Connor conducted a study of fourteen male child molesters. Many said that controlling their victims made them feel good. As one perpetrator stated, "being in control of her life was a big thrill for me" (249).

When asked why they molested children, most replied that it felt good when they did it. The molesters didn't even consider the children were people while they abused them. They viewed their victims as objects with no feeling and who would suffer nothing by being abused. The perpetrators were asked why it felt good to molest children. Some said it was for the orgasm they got out of it. One molester said this: "I remember that high, and boy I wanted it." Others claimed that if felt good to touch their victims. And still others were excited about planning out the abuse itself. "The planning was almost more exciting than actually having sex with her. Setting everything up, just to get her alone. It took a lot of my time, a lot of energy to do that. There was a lot of preoccupation, a lot of planning involved" (Gilgun & Connor
Perhaps no one will ever know what leads people, (90-97% of them male) to commit these crimes. The SHARPP advocate I spoke with told me that many abusers were abused themselves as children and the only way they felt they could control a situation was through sex. Because they never got the help they needed, they became offenders as a way of getting back at the abuse they endured.

The media too plays a big role in the incidence of child sexual abuse. Children are often exploited by the media as sexual objects before they are old enough to realize what is going on. In December of 1981, Ellen Bass and Louise Thorton went out and bought issues of four men's magazines, Playboy, Hustler, Gallery and Oui. At least once in all four magazines there was a reference to children being used as sex objects. Hustler advertised videos that featured sexually exploited children. In Oui readers were asked which celebrity made this statement: "I have never been able to understand how any father could tenderly love his charming daughter without having slept with her at least once." Hustler even depicted cartoons of "Chester the Child Molester" poking fun at molestation (243).

When males who are unstable receive these kinds of images they feel it is acceptable to abuse children. One man, a former child molester now involved in Parents United (an organization to help stop child sexual abuse) said that he grew up hearing such things as "Old enough to bleed, old enough to slaughter" (Bass and Thorton 244). No one says that child sexual abuse is moral, but the media practically condones the practice.

I wish that I had told someone when I was a kid. As it happened, I repressed the abuse and didn't remember it until after Karl died. I remember visiting him in the nursing home and not knowing why I felt the incredible urge to wash my hands every time I touched something that he touched. I know that if he were alive today I'd want to make him pay for what he did to me. Unfortunately, it is very hard to convict someone of child sexual abuse. Many times survivors don't remember until years later and then proving the abuse is difficult, if not impossible.

More states need to adopt the policy of California. Mary Williams is an attorney there and she deals with survivors of sexual abuse. As in all states, California has a statute of limitations which prevents people from suing after a certain amount of time has passed. Sexual abuse is a delicate issue and many survivors spend well over a year deciding if they want to take action against their perpetrators. A few years ago California passed a three year statute of limitations on civil actions based on abusers who are family or household members. Many survivors do not remember their abuse until years later. Fortunately, the legislation does not prohibit delayed discovery which would allow for adult survivors who have just remembered the abuse to sue their perpetrators years after the abuse occurred (Bass & Davis 307-310).

Many people wonder why survivors would want to go through the hassle of a civil suit so many years after the abuse has taken place. I would do it because it would put Karl through some of the pain he caused me. To sue him and see him try to explain and lie his way out of the situation would give me a great sense of power. For once I would be in control over him. Mary Williams says that although most of the cases are settled out of court, survivors still feel they have accomplished something by taking action against their perpetrators (310).

Often, when children tell of abuse and the abuser stands trial, not enough is done. In
1991, Marnie Rice, Vernon Quinsey, and Grant Harris conducted a study of 136 child molesters. These men had been in a maximum security psychiatric institution. When they were released, they were followed up for the next 6.3 years. Over that period, 31% were convicted of a new sexual offense. 43% were committed for a violent and/or sexual offense and 58% were arrested for some offense or returned to the institution (381).

I spoke with a man who has been in the Indiana State Prison since 1973. He told me that child molesters and rapists were treated really badly in the prison. In his words, "No one has any respect for men who abuse women and children. They get beat up, stabbed, and pushed around." Little if anything is done to reform them. In his opinion there should be a separate institution especially designed for sex offenders so that they can receive the help that they need (Interview Nov. 29, 1992).

It is really sad when men like Everett Mueller escape the system for so long that they devastate many lives. As Bowes wrote, Mueller was arrested in February of 1990 for the death of ten year old Charity Powers. After his arrest the police found that Mueller had a long history of crimes against young women. In 1972 he was charged with the kidnapping of a young California woman at knife-point. He pleaded guilty to reduced charges of pan-handling and disturbing the peace. Less than a month later he was charged with kidnapping and rape in two separate attacks. For that he spent twenty-three months in a psychiatric hospital. In July of 1976 he was convicted of the knife point rape of an eighteen year old woman. He was sentenced to forty years with a twenty year suspended sentence. He was paroled on February 23, 1988 (126). It is clear that some people do not take sexual assault seriously enough.

As stated in the Report of the Joint Ad Hoc Committee to Review New Hampshire's Rape Laws, the Commissioner of Corrections, Ronald Powell said, "I think we need to look at the parole process because I think there has been an expectation that has developed... that if a person does well in prison the expectation is that they'll be paroled at their minimum term regardless of how many times they've been there" (4). The committee is working to change the law making "intentionally touching the genitals of a child under the age of thirteen with circumstances that can be reasonably construed as being for the purpose of sexual arousal" an incidence of aggravated felonious sexual assault, a class A felony (5). This would allow for much more serious punishment, longer jail sentences.

Child sexual abuse is a serious crime. Taking advantage of another person's body is the worst thing that we do to each other with the only possible exception being murder. I know—I've lived through the pain of being molested. For a long time I did blame myself. I don't know if society made me feel that way or if it was all Karl's doing. Maybe it was a combination of both. I do know that by believing the stories of children and adult survivors and by educating people, we can work together to stop this abuse. Already I see society changing. Women aren't so scared anymore to tell their experiences. We shouldn't be scared: we should be proud that we had the courage to survive through such horror. I wish that I had never been abused. I wish that no one ever was. Since it did happen though, I refuse to stand around and not do anything about it. By speaking out we educate. As Ellen Bass stated, "In truth itself, there is healing."
References


Interview with SHARPP advocate, Susie. Dec. 2, 1992


REALITY BITES

Weight has been an obsession of mine my entire life to date. Since the day I was born I was chubby. Although most children gradually shed away their baby fat, mine just would not budge. Not only was it frustrating as a child to be overweight, but it was difficult to find clothes that fit, and to find people that judge you on your inner being, and not by just your outward appearance. As a child I was ridiculed by many, especially by the older kids at my school. I learned to ignore their comments, and often kept my feelings inside, even though they left me with a deeply wounded heart. It was not until the end of my freshman year in high school that I came to the conclusion that I was determined to lose weight. From that point on, my life completely changed from the worse to the better.

Although I have always had an excessive amount of fat on my body, it never really bothered me. This was because it was thought that the fat would shed. This process never occurred. One of the big problems was my tendency to overeat, especially at times when I was not hungry. I loved food! This was helped on because I ate almost anything that was offered to me. As a young child, my weight was not of concern to me and did not phase me in the least. That was
until the comments began to arise.

By the time I entered first grade, I began to attend a public school comprised of grades one thru eight. At first, this was extremely overwhelming, much like the transition from high school to college. Being away from home and my mom all day was tragic at first. I was so used to her being there for me during the day. I got used to it though and after the first few weeks I loved it! Then about a month after school began, I became the center of mockery by the older kids. When I walked by I was often referred to as "Miss Piggy", "Fatso", or "Chubby". It was as if I had lost my real identity. It felt as if I was being stabbed through the heart each time these wicked comments arose. Each morning I would wake up crying, not wanting to face another day of insults. I eventually made it through.

By the time I had reached seventh grade, I had matured, and found my new friends, but my weight still remained a problem. I was not verbally abused anymore, but the weight had not come off either. I was uncomfortable with my self image, but did not have the stamina to change it. Not until the end of seventh grade did I come to the conclusion that weight really does matter to others. I realized this when I asked a boy I had a crush on to go to the end of the year dance with me. He turned me down, saying that he was not planning on going with anyone. Later that day though, one of my "skinny" friends asked him to escort her to the dance.
His reply: YES.

Society makes us self conscious of our bodies. We are programmed to believe that skinny is beautiful and fat is ugly. This is what leads many to anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Models in magazines supposedly have the "perfect shape". We all strive to get this form, but who is to say what this so-called shape is.

I believe it was the summer of my freshman year when I decided that I wanted to lose weight. It was an overnight transformation. I woke up one morning and told myself that I was sick of being overweight, and was going to do something about it. From that day on my life changed forever.

The fall of my sophomore year was incredible. My friends were completely shocked with my drastic weight loss and the guys were giving me second glances. I had yet to reach my goal weight, but over the summer I had dropped a significant amount. I had never been happier in my entire life.

The fear of gaining back my weight caused me a few problems my sophomore year. I began skipping meals and exercising rigorously in order to lose more weight. I started to become anorexic. Many of the tell tale signs were noticeable in me: loss of hair, black outs, lack of energy, and loss of appetite. I was losing weight though, so it did not matter to me. By the end of the tenth grade I had dropped over seventy pounds from a size fourteen to a size
five. I had never been thin in my life. For once I was getting asked out on dates, and buying all new clothes.

On the downside, I was overexercising profusely, and was not eating enough. This caused my menstrual cycle to cease. Fortunately, my mother came to the realization that I needed help. She was fearful for me and my body. I recognized that something was wrong to, and made an appointment with the gynecologist. It was discovered that my lack of period was due to my excessive weight loss and exercising, and I was given a prescription to help me get started again. I also got back on track with my eating, and have a well balanced diet now.

Although living a healthy lifestyle, I still have an unhealthy image. Today, three years later, my period is irregular without the help of a pill, even though I have gained back fifteen pounds. I am extremely unhappy with this weight gain and would do anything to lose it. I don't think I'll ever be happy with my body. I wish that I could be, but know that it is not going to happen. Even at 110 pounds, the image locked in my head was that I had fat legs, a big stomach, and a large behind. I wish that I could accept my body the way that it is, but I cannot. I am able to look at girls in magazines, or friends of mine who are tall and stick thin, without wishing they were me. I think I'll always be unhappy with my self image unless I am able to change my state of mind completely. Weight is a constant struggle, one
that I encounter every single day of my life. I have gone through so much that I can relate to others who are overweight or need help on ways to lose weight. The only point I wish to stress is to lose the weight in a healthy way, no matter how long the process takes. My whole cycle is disrupted and I do not know if I will ever get a regular menstrual period again.

Learn to love yourself and your body. Don't try to change that which you were born with, and take pride in what you were given. The more you learn to accept your body, the happier your life will be.
Kristen's Research Essay

English 401H

October 1994

Anorexia Nervosa is an eating disorder that afflicts every one in two hundred and fifty disease that is often not noticed until the victim has dropped an excessive amount of weight. A number of things can trigger the onset of this disease such as family problems, childhood sexual abuse, and alcoholism (Business Week 75). The major factor in many cases is a lack of self-identity (Cherin 15). Many escape this emptiness by becoming anorexic. Having an eating disorder puts you in control of your body and your actions. You are able to control the amount of food you put into your mouth at all times. For people who are weak, with a poor self-esteem, this is a self-image booster. On the downside, Anorexia Nervosa is an extremely dangerous disease. You have a preoccupation with food, retreat from your social life, from classes, from activities, and exercise profusely. Much time is spent reading over calorie and fat intake charts, and measuring and weighting out food portions (Cherin 21). Your mind becomes obsessed with one thing: food.
It didn’t become evident to me until I entered high school how many students have eating disorders. To many, it was the only way to keep a slim figure which attracted the male gender. To others, it was the fear of gaining weight now or later in life. One of my friends Kelly is both anorexic and bulimic. Her reason: the fear of becoming the size of her mother. She loves her mother more than anything in the world, but dislikes the size of her. Her mother’s image was the major reason for Kelly’s eating problems. It has been identified that mothers influence daughters to become anorexic or bulimic (Cherin 42). Whether the size of the mother or her constant nagging on being thin and healthy, family is one of the factors that can contribute to the beginning of an eating disorder.

Anorexia Nervosa is a very distinct illness with a remarkable feature: relentless pursuit of excessive thinness (Hilde Bruch, M.D. ix). Once the weight starts to drop, your mind set focuses on how much better you will look with the weight off and you become determined to lose even more. Many factors add to this distinction. Supermodels in magazines, movies, and TV carry the same message, every single day, that one can be loved and respected only when slender (Bruch, M.D. viii). Society makes us self-conscious of our bodies. We are programmed to believe that skinny is beautiful and fat is ugly. This is what leads many to anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Models in magazines supposedly have the “perfect shape”. Young women strive to get this form, but who is to say what this so-called shape is.

Erin, a friend of mine who attends Loomis Chaffee in Connecticut is both anorexic and bulimic. She became anorexic her junior year in high school. She is a senior now. The instigator: her mother and a younger sister. When Erin was a baby she was adopted. Obviously her bone structure is not going to be the same as her adopted mother’s. By the
time she was a junior, she came to the realization that she wanted to look like both her
mother and sister (who was not adopted) who both had slender, small-boned figures. Her
outlet was to become both anorexic and bulimic. Erin dropped a significant amount of
weight and it was not until her grades began to slip and was down to eating six prunes a
day, that she came to the realization that she needed help. She was admitted into a hospital
and eats more now, but still not enough. She will probably never be completely healed.
Anorexics are blind to how thin they are, because no matter how much they weigh they still
claim that they are “too fat”.

Three years ago I became anorexic. It began with me wanting to lose weight. As a
child I was ridiculed by many because of my size and was often referred to a “Missy
Piggy”, “Fatso”, or “Chubby”. I was a fairly secure child with self confidence until the
comments arose. At this point it was as if I had lost my real identity. From that point on,
my weight was of concern, and I was uncomfortable with my self-image. but it was a while
before I actually had the stamina to change it. I knew at this point that weight really did
matter to others, no matter what your personality was like. After numerous tries at various
diet centers such as Weight Watchers and Nutri-system during junior high school, I came
to the conclusion that I did not have the will power to lose a significant amount of weight.
It was not until the end of my freshman year in high school, when I arose from bed one
morning with the determination that that particular morning was going to change my life
forever. It was simply an overnight transformation. I told myself that I was sick of being
overweight, and was going to do something about it this time. I started to exercise for at
least an hour and a half every single day, and I drastically cut back on my daily fat intake.
Through food restriction and rigorous exercise, anorexics pursue their goal of ultimate
thinness (Bruch, M.D. 5). Initially, my new ways were a shock to my body, but it eventually adjusted. From then on the pounds just dropped significantly. That particular morning had changed my life forever.

The fall of my sophomore year was incredible. My friends were completely shocked with my drastic weight loss and the guys were giving me second glances. I had yet to reach my goal weight, but over the summer I had dropped a substantial amount. In less than three months, I had lost thirty-five pounds. I had never been happier in my entire life. The fear of gaining back my weight caused me a few problems my sophomore year. I began skipping meals and exercising profusely in order to lose more weight. I started to become anorexic. Every single day I woke up to the realization that I was not eating but was losing weight. The weight was so easy to lose. With enough willpower I could control my urge to eat. Besides, even though I was constantly getting hunger pains throughout the day, it was locked into my mind that I was full. That was the reason my stomach was upset all the time. One of the three areas of misinterpreted psychological functioning in anorexics is inaccuracy in the way hunger is experienced (Bruch, M.D. x). With anorexics, the mind takes over complete control of the body, and anything "bad" that they eat, they get punished for. One time after school, after not eating anything all day, I gave in to my longing for something sweet. The culprit: a peanut butter cookie. Initially, it tasted heavenly. Each bite tasted like a million dollars. After I had eaten it though, I felt like a fat slob. It was as if I had gained back twenty pounds. The fat felt like it was swelling up on my body and I felt extreme guilt for it. Major problems characteristic of most anorexics are disturbances in the body image, in the way that they see themselves (Bruch, M.D. 85).

As soon as I got home I went straight to the VCR, put in an aerobics tape, and did an hour
and a half of aerobics. I was going to work that cookie off no matter how long it took.

Anxiety about the fate of food results in excessive exercising (Bruch, M.D., 85). Exercise was a necessity. I could not miss a single day of it. It was really a matter of life or death. No matter what sort of dilemma was occurring, I always found the time to exercise. This caused me to separate myself from my family and friends to a point where I began to actually lose friends. One anorexic I read about actually drew a self portrait of herself as being self-divided, two-in-one. She drew herself completely surrounded by spikes, which were described as the “forcefield”. This defended her against the world, hostility, and friends alike (Maud Ellmann 44).

Besides my lack of eating and excessive exercising, many of the telltale signs of anorexia were noticeable in me: loss of hair, blackouts, lack of energy, and irritability. By the end of tenth grade I had dropped over 70 pounds from a size fourteen to a size five. I had never been thin in my life. For once I was getting asked out on dates, and buying all new clothes. A large percentage of young adults judge you by the way that you look on the outside, not by your inner being. Being thin, I discovered had people view me differently than before. It was as if being thin made me a better person.

Another downside to anorexia is the cessation of the menstrual period. Mine ceased completely for a long period of time. Fortunately, by this point, my mother came to the realization that I needed help. She was fearful for me and my body. Did I really need help? Was my body deteriorating right before my eyes without my knowledge? I trusted what my mother was saying and ended up taking the initiative. My first step to recovery began by making an appointment with the gynecologist. After acknowledging the disease by getting help, many anorexics confess that this cruel dieting was a way to make them the
center of attention, because they felt as though nobody really cared for them (Bruch. M.D.
3). At the gynecologist, it was discovered that my lack of period was due to my excessive
weight loss and exercising, and I was given a prescription to help me get started again. I
also got back on track with my eating, and have a well balanced diet now. Before I would
not even take a bite out of a piece of chocolate or anything that was “fattening”. I now
realize that an occasional treat is not going to convert me back to my old unhealthy eating
habits.

Today, I have finally come to terms with my real identity. Although living a
healthy lifestyle, I still am not completely cured. My period is still irregular without the
help of a pill, even though I have gained back fifteen pounds. I am extremely unhappy
with this weight gain and would do anything to lose it. I don’t think I’ll ever be completely
satisfied with my body. I wish that I could be, but know that it is not going to happen.
Even at my lowest weight, 110 pounds, the image locked in my head was that I had fat
legs, a big stomach and a large behind. I wish that I could except my body the way it is,
but I cannot. When looking at girls in magazines, or friends of mine who are tall and stick
thin, I wish they were me. I think I’ll always be unhappy with my self image unless I am
able to change my state of mind completely. Weight is a constant struggle, one that I
encounter every single day of my life. I have gone through so much that I can relate to
others who are overweight or need help on ways to lose weight. The only point I wish to
stress is to lose the weight in a healthy way, no matter how long the process takes. My
whole cycle is disrupted and I do not know if I will ever get a regular menstrual period
again.
Learn to love yourself and your body. Don’t try to change that which you were born with, and take pride in what you were given. The more you learn to accept your body, the happier your life will be.
Works Cited


Lisa's Essay (Katerina's class)

An Ethnic Sound

I am resting on my unmade bed, listening to music and reading a book when a friend walks in. The music I am listening to is from a rap group called Black Sheep, the volume is low and it is difficult to make out the lyrics. However, my friend, Chris, can hear the beat and the bass and identify that it is rap music, so he decides to make up his own lyrics, determined that anybody can be a rapper. "I got a nine millimeter gun and I'm going to shoot a nigger because I am one bad mother f-ker—a boom boom cha." His tone is facetious and I inform him that the song is about eating disorders, and then I asked him why he said those lyrics. His response was that all rap music is about money, drugs, violence and sex. These topics are common in more popular music, but not all rap music share those characteristics. Many people justify why African Americans live in the ghetto through the lyrics about killing each other and using drugs. It is true, that in gangster rap, those are common song themes. I ask myself, why do people rap about these things and why do people only see one side to rap music? People need to consider that rap music is part of the African American culture and if there is a problem that it should be recognized and not criticized.

Rap music is predominantly based on the African American culture. Many non-rap listeners criticize the music without knowing or understanding much about it. I believe rap music was influenced by the African Americans need to express themselves to a society which often doesn't listen to them. Rappers have a great deal to say about their culture and the culture around them. It is not easy to hear because it can come out in anger or a socially unacceptable way. Every rapper has their own opinion. There are many forms of rap music such as, hip-hop, R&B, gangster, and lighter tip rap music. All these styles encompass the African American culture.

I believe rap music is pertinent and important in today's society. African American history fascinates me and makes me realize the impact history has on African Americans in 1994. The song "Can't Trust It" by Public Enemy is about coming over to America on slave ships, and how today they still can't trust the white person. African Americans have been suppressed ever since they forcefully arrived in America. Even after slavery, Blacks were not allowed to vote and they were unable to readily communicate with the rest of the American population. Even today, the voice of the African American is seldom heard or understood. Each individual has their own opinion, and in all types of rap music I hear the frustration in their voices and the longing to be heard by the white main-stream society. Public Enemy (even their name is ironic) expresses themselves through the song, "Hit the Road Jack." "I remember when us blacks were on our backs, and our color had 'em playin' us out like we were Cinderella. Mothers cried while forefathers died from the whip and not a bit ever made the paper." Ice-Cube has a song called "— 'Em." He says, "I do want the white community to understand our community more and see what's going on and see what the things they've done to us in the past, is still effecting us now—mentally—ya know." The music might have began as entertainment, but now I believe it is more of a way to express themselves to the people who won't listen to them. Through music, African Americans are speaking to the white society, as well as educating their own people.

Besides communicating through rap music, another influence of rap music is the money the industry takes in. It is a great source of income among many Black men and women, and even children. African Americans in the ghetto have little opportunities and it is hard for them to stay above the poverty line. Some rappers become rappers so they can earn a living without selling drugs or other illegal actions. Unfortunately, some rappers include crude, degrading and violent
lyrics just to make their records sell. What kind of environment are they living in if that sort of music is so popular? KRS-1 puts it this way, "Where I'm from, if you're soft you lost. To stay on course means to roll with force." This is the mentality of too many African American males in the ghetto. To survive you need to be tough, to make it in the rap industry you also need to be tough. Too Short, a popular rapper, said in an interview that he did not care how or who his music affected as long as he was making money. "It's all about getting yours," says Doctor Dre. Some Americans might look at Too Short and other such rappers as evil, but they are in a system which offers them little opportunity and education. People who do not listen to rap music may hear a song containing harsh graphic lyrics and condemn the entire style of music. They assume that rap music promotes violence, sex and inferiority in women. In some cases this is true, but it is important to keep in mind that not all rap music is like that. Gangster rap is one of the most publicized and vile styles of rap, leaving people with the impression that this is what all rap music is about. This is where negative stereo-types of African Americans begin. A minority is always judged harder and quicker than the majority. There is a difference between describing where you live and promoting violence. John Cougar Mellencamp describes how he, "lives in a small town" and Ice-T describes how he lives, "in the killing fields." Rappers live in violence and rap about violence. Maybe if they lived in another area they would have more positive topics to write about. Violent lyrics help whites justify their continuous racism against African Americans. To be open minded you must consider the factors that makes an individual do the things they do. Chuck-D shares his opinion through the song "Gotta Do What I Gotta Do." "I gotta do what I gotta do, so who the hell is you, to tell me how my song is wrong, you don't know, you think my rhyme's about stealin', but it's about feelin' . . ." Chuck-D is justifying himself to the people who criticize his music and his culture.

What is most interesting to me is that rap music is today's music. What rappers rap about is what is going on now. They are teaching and educating their own ethnic group through their lyrics. They know the schools aren't teaching about their culture, so some rappers took it upon themselves to teach others. "The House" by Ice-T is a song about child abuse in the ghetto, "Air Hoodlum" by Public Enemy is about a pro basketball player who cannot read. Queen Latifah promotes a sense of pride and equality to other African American women. Her song "Unity" is about unifying the people in her culture. Queen Latifah sings in her song, "Nuff of the Ruff Stuff" that "I've often been classified as a feminine teacher, collectively capturing the heart of a nation, love my culture and show appreciation." These songs are the only education that some Black ghetto residents get about their ethnic background.

From listening to a variety of rap music I obtain an understanding of what it is like in the inner cities and how the artist feels about living there. Through rap music I hear the frustrations of African Americans. Rappers sing about their social, economic, and political situation. "Burn Hollywood Burn" criticizes the fake and plastic media our society tends to favor, that leaves out the African American group. Boogie Down Productions explains their economic situation in the song "Material Love Is Gonna Getcha." "I got three pairs of pants—with my brother I share. I go to school and get dissed like a fool, because with one and a half pairs of pants you ain't cool. But there's no dollars for nuthin' else—I got beans and rice and bread on my shelf. Everyday I see my mother struggling, now it's time I got to do something. I look for work and get dissed like a jerk. So here comes Rob, his gold is shimmering, he gives me $200 for a quick delivery . . ." This also shows how tempting it is to become involved with drugs. Politically, Ice-T has a very strong view point. In his song "You Should Have Killed Me Last Year" he states, "Fuck the police, Fuck the F.B.I., Fuck the D.E.A., Fuck the C.I.A., Fuck Tipper Gore, Bush, and his crippled bitch—told
ya—Should have killed me last year." There is an anger in this group which needs to be acknowledged and dealt with before it explodes. Ice-T's lyrics are offensive, but people need to understand where he is coming from because obviously there is a problem that can't be ignored. Rappers are expressing their concern with American's economic, politic and social standing through their music. Even if we don't accept it we must deal with it if we want to establish unity in our country.

Rap music is a significant part of the African American culture. We live in a predominantly white country and culture where the voice of an African American can be a light whisper in the ears of the deaf. Through rap music, and the different types of rap music one can understand the pleasures and sacrifices of the African Americans living in the ghetto. Of course, not all African Americans live in the ghetto and not all African Americans should be put in the stereo typical rap persona. Rap groups such as, Black Sheep, Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul, Arrested Development, and many other groups rap about positive things or things they like to do. The song "Summertime" by D.J. Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince describes a summer day with their friends at a barbecue and everyone is having a good time. Rap music can be pleasant music, which some people don't seem to understand.

Not all Black people like or agree with certain styles of rap music. It is important not to judge an entire group of people by one form of music. Most minorities are not heard by the rest of our country. Music, including rap music, gives minorities the opportunity to express themselves in the form of entertainment. African Americans are often rated lower on the stratification scale, so their opinions are less acknowledged. Rap music embraces a part of the ethnicity of African Americans. I wish more people could understand the causes and effects of rap music, as to gain a different insight of the African American culture.
My Response to Lisa's Essay "AN ETHNIC SOUND"

I was so glad, practically relieved when I read through the first paragraph of Lisa's paper entitled "AN ETHNIC SOUND." I was relieved because I realized that the issue of the paper (rap music, how it is commonly stereotyped by non-rap listeners, and about the critical issues in today's society involving the quality of life/most African-Americans) is being recognized. I agreed with what she had to say in her essay and I liked the way she presented these issues.

I myself have never been really into rap music, but I don't say that I just plain don't like it as entirely too many people, primarily white people do. I try to listen to all music be it country, metal, rap or folk music if not for entertainment— to hear what the song has to say. I must admit there have been times that I've said that I didn't like rap music and that I didn't like country music, but I think that as I've become more aware through education, observing my surroundings, talking to friends and most importantly, hearing what people have to say my mind has become more open.

I guess you could go so far as to say that I used to be one of those people Lisa discussed in her paper that thought that all rap was about degradation of women and that it placed little value on human life until my best friend made me listen to her "mixes" and I realized that not all of the music really was that bad. I heard Queen Latifa's "Unity" and I realized that this song had a very important message. "Who you callin' bitch?" she accuses. She sings to women, telling them to demand the respect they deserve. "You ain't a bitch or a ho," she explains. I think it was this song that told me to wake up, that there was more to rap than disrespectful sex and violence, there are serious social issues
addressed in rap music. I was just so glad when I read Lisa's essay to see that other people (White people) see how critical these issues are in today's society.

However, when it came time for the class to discuss the essay I was absolutely stunned when that girl, the same one who complains about everything, said that she thought that the essay was "annoying." First of all, what kind of a person has the nerve to say that she thinks her classmate's paper is annoying and secondly, how can anyone say that they're sick of hearing about this subject constantly? Maybe I live a sheltered life or something but I really can't identify with her complaint. I really don't think that we hear enough about this stuff. I think that society has got a major problem on it's hands about the quality of life for minorities that must be addressed and isn't.

When people began to back up the "annoying" girl (I forget her name, I'll call her Sue) by saying that information on this topic is everywhere- M.T.V. etc., I was amazed. I suppose it is basically true that I never watch T.V., but I find it really hard to believe that these issues are addressed everywhere.

I was overcome with pure frustration. I knew I should have said something in class and wanted to but I was past frustration. I was mad. I'm not sure why I got so angry, but I even had the little tremors and hot cheeks of true anger. People in the class, not all but a lot, were the same "Chris" that Lisa wrote about who generalized all rap as just being about killing and sex. This is true of the typical gangster rap, but this conveys a message to the listener that this is an issue that must be changed. Sure I understood when many people said that they didn't want to listen to this kind of music because it is so negative, but for goodness' sake, at least hear and be aware of what is going on! I want people to hear the words and to say that no one should have to live like that. Something must be done. I don't want them to tune themselves out and say that we hear too much about this problem. Obviously we don't hear about it enough when conditions in the ghetto persist, perhaps even worsen as they do.

To the living conditions described in the "typical rap song" some of the students in
the class said that these are the bad-ass images that rappers are constantly portraying through their music and appearance. Students said how these rappers probably don't even know what it's like in the ghetto, they probably live very rich lifestyles and just front the gangster image. I tend to disagree. I think that these rappers are conveying an insight to a life of repression, biggotry, and poor opportunity. Lisa refers to a song in which the Black man's family is struggling to make ends meet and the man shares three pairs of pants between he and his brother. The man sees his friend decked in chains of gold who gives him "$200 dollars for a quick delivery..."

These lyrics are pleading for better working opportunity. The lyrics are not glorifying drug dealing, they are saying that there isn't really any other way to turn. The sale of drugs turns big money fast, and it is hard, almost impossible to find a job that pays enough to get by. America must find a way to create more jobs. It is my opinion that this is the best way to fight the drug problem. Instead of sinking billions of dollars each year into the "war on drugs," why can't this money go toward creating jobs? Drug education is important I know, but there will always be people that will abuse drugs no matter what anyone tells them. But, for those who have nothing else to turn to (money-wise and living conditions so poor that they have no self respect) there must be some way to create better opportunity.

The solution to these problems must start with communication. The majority of White people tune themselves out to rap for the main reason that they think the music doesn't apply to them in the first place. I see from my own experience that people tend to listen to the music that I guess you could say "applies" to them and that they can identify with the most. For instance there is the category of the Dead Heads. These people tend to enjoy a good time in various states of mind, there are those who like classic rock such as Led Zeppelin, and some people like my roommate like county music. She likes it because she's a country girl at heart; she is a sheep farmer. All of these styles of music have so much to say either about different ways of life, feelings, social and personal...
concerns and even historical events and attitudes. Music is a way to understand all of these topics by hearing what the words have to say and feeling how the mood of the song affects you.

We need to talk about the problems of our society. As I noticed in the class discussion, there was a strong feeling of tension and anxiety about the issue of racism that seemed to be making everyone breathe a little more shallowly and tightened around our esophagases like a tight turtle neck shirt. "The paper isn't about racism." said one person. But the paper was about racism in our society and the kind of lifestyle it has created. People in the class said that they didn't want to listen to rap because of its messages of hate and violence. They said that rap gave them feelings of anger and destruction.

It is absolutely crucial to listen to these messages that rap conveys because these are major problems in society everywhere. The more we don't listen to these messages either because they "don't apply to us" or we just plain don't like to hear it, the more we contribute to the problems. The more we don't talk about the issue of racism the longer it lasts. We can not afford to tolerate racism in society anywhere, anytime. There are so many brilliant minds and colorful cultures to repress any one of them. These issues do apply to us because our generation must annihilate the fist of racism and its brass knuckles of related issues. We must open our minds to hear the words of rap music and then talk about the issues.
For this assignment, I'd like for you think of a time when you (or another female) had a particularly negative experience with "being beautiful," feeling the pressure to be "beautiful." You might consider these questions as you think about what you want to say:

What was the situation that created the pressure to look beautiful?

What did you/she do to "become" beautiful?

How did you (or the female you're writing about) feel about your/herself and the others around you/her?

What happened that made the experience negative? What had you/she expected or hoped would happen?

Describe for us the experience, telling us what we need to know to understand what happened, and then go on to draw some conclusions about what it means to be beautiful in our society.

What do you/does she perceive is our society's definition of "beautiful"?

Who seems to decide what and who is beautiful in our society?

Why do you believe we have this conception of beauty? What purpose, if any, does it seem to serve (or whom does it serve)?

What are the consequences for women of this pressure for women to be beautiful?

This writing assignment is a rough draft, not a finished paper. This will not be graded. Don't worry about organization, structure, correctness and the like because I'm not concerned with those issues yet. Do whatever you have to get yourself ready, and then just start writing, exploring what you can say about our society's pressure on women to be beautiful. Focus on your ideas rather than on your words.
For this assignment, think of a time when it was to your advantage (or that of another female you know) to be a female, a time when just being a female allowed you to do or act or say something that a male in the same situation would not have been able to do, act, or say. As in Assignment #1, describe the situation for us, telling us what we need to know to understand what happened.

What was the situation?
How did you respond? How did you feel?
How do you suspect the people around you felt?

Then, go on to see what you can say about the "privileges"/advantages to being female in our society.
What do women seem to be able to do by virtue of being "female"?

Why do you suppose women have these "privileges"?

In your experience, do these "privileges" seem to be beneficial or detrimental for women? How so? Why?

If these "privileges" serve or benefit anyone, whom do they serve? Whom do they harm, if anyone?

The two series of questions after each part of this assignment are designed to help you open up an exploration of the subject. They are not questions that you have to answer in your essay, and they are not meant to provide and easy way of ordering your paper. They are meant to be starting points for your thinking about the subject. You may choose to look into one and not the other. You might even come up with your own questions (which I strongly encourage you to do). They are there for you to use as you want to use them, as you find them helpful for getting into your thinking and writing.

Look at the assignment as an exploratory writing, a way of coming to terms with your experiences and discovering what you can say. Try to produce a draft that allows you to think about the subject and to share your thinking with us in the class. We will not expect the writing to be meticulously organized, fully worked out, or finely polished, and we will not expect you to give us startling new insights into the privileges/advantages of being female. But we will expect you to have something to say to us, or at least to try to do the kind of thinking, exploring, and writing that may lead you to have something worth sharing. We will be looking for what you can tell us about the subject, based on your own experience and your own thinking, and what you can contribute to our classroom conversation about this topic. This
kind of thinking, of course, will likely require you to do more than writing the paper up in a single sitting.
For this assignment, think of a time when it was to your disadvantage (or that of another female you know) to be a female, a time when just being a female meant you were not allowed to do or act or say something that a male in the same situation would have been able to do, act, or say. As in previous assignments, describe the situation for us, telling us what we need to know to understand what happened.

What was the situation? What were you not allowed to do?
How did you respond? How did you feel?
How do you suspect the people around you felt?
Who or what was restricting you?

Then, go on to see what you can say about the disadvantages to being female in our society, the restrictions women still may face.

What don't women seem to be able to do just because they're "female"?

Why do you suppose women have these restrictions?

In your experience, do these disadvantages seem to be beneficial or detrimental for women? How so? Why?

If these restrictions serve or benefit anyone, whom do they serve? Whom do they harm, if anyone?

How was this situation different from the one you wrote about in Assignment #2? What seem(s) to be the deciding factor(s) in what women can and cannot do?

What function do these privileges and restrictions for females seem to serve in our society?

As in previous exploratory writings, don't worry too much about organization or mechanics--concentrate on exploring and developing your thoughts on this subject for us, trying to discover something you may have not thought of before about what it means to be female in our culture.
For this paper, I want you to develop your own assignment based on what you would like to write about. The focus of your paper may be anything that was somehow sparked by The Cinderella Complex, even if it seems remotely related. (Think about the questions you asked in your second reading response to the book--many of them would make excellent papers.) In general, the paper should deal with some aspect of female experience that interests you and that was generated by or commented on in Dowling's book. After listing your ideas, try to choose a topic (tentatively) that you can form into a question or a statement that will invite you to explore and discover your ideas. As I evaluate your final drafts, I will be concentrating more on your thinking on this subject than on structural and mechanical concerns. I'll ask you to turn in a proposal to me on Tuesday, February 13 (final draft due Feb. 20) that considers the following questions.

What question, issue, or idea do you want to consider? Why have you chosen this?

Who will your audience be? Why did you choose that group? How might they react to what you are writing?

What do you hope to achieve by writing about this--both for yourself and for your readers? In other words, what is your purpose?

What questions might you consider as you explore your thoughts on this?
For this paper, I'd like you to focus on a central question or idea about female experience that will enable you to explore your own and possibly others' thoughts and to share your conclusions with the class. Focus on anything about female experience that interests or intrigues you, especially something we haven't discussed in class, even if it is remotely related to the readings. I'd like for you to write more than one draft for this paper:

**Discovery Draft:** You'll first be doing a discovery draft--writing to discover what you have to say on the topic you choose. The purpose of this 750+ word discovery draft is simply to get your thinking on paper. Please bring this draft to class on Tuesday March 13. To help you, you might consider the following questions:

- What question, issue, or idea do you want to consider? Why have you chosen this?
- What questions might you consider as you explore your thoughts on this question, issue, or idea?

When you have completed your discovery draft, I'd like for you to reread what you've written, underlining the most interesting and most important ideas you discovered. Then, pursue answers to the following questions on a separate sheet of paper (also due Tuesday March 13):

- What relationships do you see between ideas you underlined in your discovery draft?
- How might you shape/organize a paper around those ideas?
- What specific details and anecdotes from your personal experience (or those of someone you know or interview) might help you to make your ideas most convincing?
- What passages or events in the articles and the novel we've read this semester might support or illustrate your ideas?

**Polished Draft:** Finally, I'm asking that you shape a polished, 750+ word draft around what you consider to be the most intriguing, most insightful ideas that you discovered and underlined in your discovery draft. When evaluating this paper, I'll be focusing on your ideas and your attempt to share them.
More specifically, I'll be focusing on the depth of your exploring and thinking and the success of your efforts to make your ideas clear and convincing to readers in our class.

When you hand in your polished draft, include with it your discovery draft and all other writing you did to complete each draft of this assignment.

Here are a few suggestions for topics if you're having trouble coming up with your own (even though I'm more interested in your ideas and what you are interested in):

You might analyze the images of women in advertising and explore the influence these images might have on how women perceive themselves and their roles, their ambitions, their body, their sexuality or their sexual experiences, etc.

In "The Female Animal," Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg discuss the way 19th century medicine justified women's roles. How do you believe 20th century society (like medicine, psychology, business, etc.; TV, movies, magazines, books, etc.) justifies women's roles today or tries to show women how they should behave? (This would necessarily involve explaining how you perceive our culture defines women's roles).

Given how "The Female Animal" describes women's roles and what society expected of them in the 19th century, how do you see female experience has changed--for better or worse--in the 20th?

You might choose a passage from any of the readings (including The Bluest Eye) and use it as a springboard into a discussion of the issues or questions it raises (e.g., on sexuality, beauty, love, birth control, black female experience, etc.).

You might also go back to your exploratory writings and reading responses to see what ideas you'd be interested in exploring further and developing into a more formal paper. Or, you might choose to focus on an issue raised during your discussion of homosexuality.

You might also read one of the articles in the packet that we probably won't get to and respond to it in some way. Be sure to focus your discussion on one or two central points. We may not get to: "The New Racism: Sexism," "Male Perspective in Language," "Men and Women Talking," "Just a Housewife," and "The Changing Dream." (These last two we will try to read as a class if we have time, but I would encourage you to read them now if you're interested. They're quite a bit longer than the other articles.)

Focus a paper around one of the questions you have developed from the brainstormed list about female sexuality we had on the board.